

Technology, Telecommunications & Energy

HB 1181

Brief Description: *Revising the authority of the statewide enhanced 911 program to support the statewide enhanced 911 system.*

Sponsors: *Representatives O'Brien, Crouse, Cooper, Delvin, Poulsen, Simpson, Lovick, Reardon, Clements, Haigh, Wood and Santos.*

Brief Summary of Bill

- *Establishes priorities for use of state E911 excise tax revenue.*

Hearing Date: *2/7/01*

Staff: *Bob Longman (786-7139).*

Background:

Where a 911 system is available, a person can contact emergency assistance by dialing 911.— Under a basic 911 system, the caller must identify his or her location to the emergency system personnel. Under an enhanced 911 (E-911) system, the caller's phone number and location are automatically displayed at the 911 call center.

Enhanced 911 services are funded by county and state excise taxes. All counties levy an excise tax on each switched telephone access line. The maximum rate that a county may levy on a switched line is 50 cents. Counties may also impose an excise tax of up to 25 cents per month on each radio (wireless/cellular) access line for 911 purposes.

In 1991 voters adopted Referendum 42 which authorized a maximum monthly state tax of 20 cents per switched access line to develop an E-911 system. The state tax was scheduled to lower to 10 cents after December 31, 1998. However, in 1998 the Legislature made the 20 cents maximum rate permanent. The actual tax rate is to be based on actual revenue needs and may vary from year to year. The state E911 coordinator, in the state military department, recommends a rate each year to the utilities and transportation commission, which sets the rate for the following year.

State E-911 tax revenue must be used only to help implement and operate E911 services statewide. State tax revenue may be used to pay for increased salary costs in a county with fewer than 75,000 residents, if the county's salary costs have increased as a result of handling 911 calls. This salary assistance is limited to a maximum of 3 years. A county may not receive any state E-911 tax funds unless the county has imposed the maximum county 911 taxes. When two or more counties jointly operate a multi county E-911 system, state assistance may be provided to the multi county region. If counties in the multi county region have fewer than 75,000 residents, then the state assistance may include salary assistance. There is no restriction on the number of years that salary assistance may be provided to a multi county region. The state E911 coordinator specifies by rule the purposes for which state tax revenue may be spent.

Summary of Bill:

Specific provisions permitting state enhanced 911 tax revenue to be spent for local salary assistance are eliminated. The state E911 coordinator continues to be responsible for rules specifying the purposes for which state tax revenue may be spent. In specifying rules, the coordinator may enter into statewide agreements to improve 911 services. The coordinator must consider individual county needs. Priorities for funding are: First, to assure that 911 dialing is operational statewide; second, to assist counties in achieving a basic service level for 911 operations; and third, to assist counties in acquiring capital items for increasing 911 effectiveness.

Effective Date: *The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect on July 1, 2001.*

Appropriation: *None.*

Fiscal Note: *Available.*