

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6846

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Ways & Means, March 3, 2010

Title: An act relating to enhanced 911 emergency communications services.

Brief Description: Concerning enhanced 911 emergency communications services.

Sponsors: Senators Brandland, Regala and Fraser.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Ways & Means: 2/05/10, 3/03/10 [DPS, DNP, w/oRec].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6846 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Prentice, Chair; Fraser, Vice Chair, Capital Budget Chair; Tom, Vice Chair, Operating Budget; Brandland, Fairley, Hobbs, Honeyford, Keiser, Kline, Kohl-Welles, McDermott, Murray, Parlette, Pridemore, Regala and Rockefeller.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senator Carrell.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senators Zarelli, Ranking Minority Member; Schoesler.

Staff: Dean Carlson (786-7305)

Background: Emergency 911 communications services allow callers to reach agencies that can dispatch an appropriate type of response. Enhanced 911 (E-911) is a type of service that allows the caller's phone number and location to be automatically displayed at the public safety answering point. In Washington 911 systems are primarily administered by counties and in some cases, cities.

Enhanced 911 services are funded by county and state excise taxes. All counties may impose an excise tax on each switched telephone access line. The maximum rate that a county may levy on a switched access line is 50 cents. Counties may also impose an excise tax of up to 50 cents per month on each radio (wireless) access line. In contrast to the counties, the state only levies a 20-cent tax on switched telephone access lines and radio access lines. State

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

E-911 excise taxes fund a state E-911 coordinator and help counties to pay for the extra costs incurred in upgrading from a basic system to an E-911 system.

Summary of Bill (Recommended Substitute): On January 1, 2011, counties may impose an E-911 excise tax for each switched access lines, radio access lines, and interconnected voice over internet protocol (VOIP) service line, in the amount not exceeding 70 cents per month.

On January 1, 2011, the state may impose an E-911 excise tax for each switched access lines, radio access lines, and interconnected VOIP service line, in the amount not exceeding 25 cents per month.

Counties imposing a county E-911 excise tax must provide an annual update to the enhanced 911 coordinator detailing the proportion of their county E-911 excise tax that is being spent on:

- efforts to modernize their existing 911 system; and
- enhancing E-911 operational costs.

The enhanced 911 coordinator must specify rules, with the assistance of the enhanced 911 advisory committee, defining the purposes for which available state enhanced 911 funding may be expended. In addition, the enhanced 911 coordinator must provide an annual updated to the enhanced 911 advisory committee on how much money each county has spent on efforts to modernize their existing 911 system and basic and enhanced 911 operating costs.

The state and county E-911 excise tax must be paid by the subscriber to the local exchange company providing the switched access line, the radio communications service company providing the radio access line, or the provider of VOIP service line.

Counties imposing an E-911 excise tax must contract with the Department of Revenue for the administration and collection of the tax prior to the effective date of a resolution or ordinance imposing the tax. The department may deduct a percentage amount, as provided by contract, of no more than 2 percent of the E-911 excise taxes collected to cover administration and collection expenses incurred by the department. The remainder of the portion of the county E-911 excise tax must be remitted to the department and deposited into an account in the state treasury.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY WAYS & MEANS COMMITTEE (Recommended Substitute): The substitute makes several technical changes regarding the administration of the tax.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 4, 2010.
[OFM requested ten-year cost projection pursuant to I-960.]

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: The bill contains several effective dates. Please refer to the bill.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Original Bill: PRO: The bill would help modernize the 911 emergency response system. It would replace the outdated 1960s 911 system in order to increase access in accordance with ADA standards and increase efficiency of response time to emergencies around the state. The old system is inefficient because it is unable to interface with new technologies. The new system would incorporate voice and data texting which would help better serve the 600,000 hearing impaired/deaf residents who are not being equally served by the 911 system.

Rural counties do not have the tax base to finance these updates themselves. The cost of updates should be shared to the greatest need across the state.

Persons Testifying: PRO: John Suessman, Lacey Police; Jo Arlow, Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs; Brian Enslow, Washington State Association of Counties; Steve Gano, AT&T; James Broman, Lacey Fire District; Jim Quackenbush, Washington State E-911 Advisory Committee, NENA, Thurston County 911 Communication Board, Washington State Fire Commissioner; Lorlee Mizell, Washington State 911 Advisory Committee, Spokane County 911.