



## **Kansas Sheriffs Association**

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### **Presentation to the Senate Utilities Committee Law Enforcement Operational Needs for Broadband in Rural Kansas**

January 26, 2016

Chairman Olson and members of the Kansas Senate Utilities Committee,

On behalf of the members of the Kansas Sheriffs Association in our great State, thank you for the opportunity to visit with you about communication technologies but more especially about the potential benefits of broadband in the rural areas of Kansas. As is true in any organization or discipline, the ability to communicate is one of the most important factors in determining success. For law enforcement, and all of public safety, our ability to communicate with each other and with the public during emergencies and every day operations is often the factor that determines success which is measured in successful resolution of the emergency and continuation of public trust. To ensure that we are constantly seeking the methods to meet this milestone, it is imperative that all levels of government remain informed and involved in seeking the best available technologies and methods to establish and maintain communication.

Broadband technologies, as we are all aware, have emerged in the last few years with great potential for every person. As it pertains to law enforcement, this technology serves as a deliverable for many different applications which can make law enforcement more efficient in every day functions as well as during emergency operations. We have long sought the ability to share critical information across local jurisdictions as well as among disciplines in a secure and reliable way. Affordable access to broadband networks will help to facilitate that.

For rural Sheriff's Offices, low populations mean a small number of deputies available to answer calls for service, respond to emergencies, maintain a jail, provide security for the courts and serve civil processes. Given that most counties average a size of 900 square miles, rural county deputies are required to remain mobile and flexible to perform their myriad of duties on a daily basis. In response to the constant need for greater adaptability and accountability, many Sheriff's Offices have employed technologies such as body worn and vehicle mounted camera systems and Mobile Data Terminals to help provide access to data, typically only available at the office, in an effort to keep officers patrolling and remaining visible to the general public. The challenges associated with these resources are related to cost, not only of the technology, but the way in which it is delivered. Easier access to broadband should not only provide faster and more reliable connections to data, but also be more affordable and cost effective as well.

As demands evolve and increase on law enforcement and emergency responders, so too will the need for access to timely and accurate data that can be shared among responders to affect the best result possible. Currently agencies are using mobile data terminals along with LTE technology for numerous applications. Common applications used in rural agencies are directed towards weather radar, access to records management systems, 911 mapping and routing as well as other GIS based data. The ability to expand our connectivity using broadband will ensure these current applications are always accessible for responders and provide for the evolution and development of applications aimed at greater efficiency, data access, interoperability and security.

In closing, there is no greater asset for Kansans than a well trained and equipped first responder. The harsh reality for those in rural communities is that hiring more deputies and officers is simply not an option. The fact remains that rural deputies will always be required to respond to any emergency or investigation, almost 30 miles from their office and with very little help. If we cannot provide them with additional responders, the best thing that we can do is ensure that our responders have access to the data they need, when they need it no matter their location. Expanding broadband coverage provides the deliverable mechanism we need to do just that.

Sheriff Cole Presley, Graham County

Sheriff Troy Briggs, Haskell County, KSA President