

TESTIMONY OF ELLEN M. WERNICKE
BEFORE THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON UTILITIES
SENATOR ROBERT OLSON, CHAIR
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2018

Mr. Chairman and Committee members, thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on behalf of Johnson County Emergency Management & Communications in support of Senate Bill 420 amending the current Kansas 911 Act. Since implementation of the 911 Coordinating Council's hosted solution it has proven to be an effective and efficient system across the state. However, without amending the current Kansas 911 Act future progress is not sustainable, which comes at a cost to the citizens of Kansas.

Fee Increase

Johnson County Emergency Management & Communications is not currently on the hosted solution. Johnson, Wyandotte, Leavenworth and Miami Counties are part of the Mid America Regional Council and operate on a 911 platform common to the MARC region. The 911 fee that is received by our county is used to support our ongoing 911 expenses. The current funding mechanism is not sufficient enough to support 911 capital expenditures and ongoing daily operating expenses of the 911 centers.

Kansas 911 networks and 911 emergency communication systems must continue to be improved to meet growing citizen expectations that they can contact 911 with the technologies that they use every day. Future Enhanced 911 systems must also have the capability to transmit digital information and images received from citizens at 911 Centers, to the public safety responders in the field, to incident command centers and to hospital emergency rooms. Much study has occurred nationally by federal agencies, carriers and public safety communications associations to identify Next Generation 911 (NG911) system technologies and technical standards. The cost to continue modernizing our 911 systems in Kansas and to pay ongoing operating and maintenance costs will require additional funding to sustain our operations.

The continuation of sufficient 911 revenue levels will be essential to maintaining and to upgrading enhanced 911 systems and dispatch center equipment to meet emerging needs. Without question, Johnson County Emergency Management & Communications supports the fee increase to .90 cents.

GIS Data

Johnson County Emergency Management & Communications receives over 65% of our 911 calls via wireless devices and seconds are critical when trying to locate citizens. All too often 911 calls are routed inappropriately because cellular calls are routed based on of which tower the call "hits" off of and/or which tower face. As Kansas migrates to NG911, calls will be sent to the appropriate 911 center via geospatial call routing. Geospatial call routing is based off of the caller's cellular device, rather than a tower location.

The ongoing GIS data and maintenance are critical to geospatially 911 call routing. Many counties in Kansas do not have GIS departments and rely on contracted services from GIS vendors recommended by the Kansas 911 Coordinating Council. The maintenance associated with these services to 911 centers is a relatively new expenditure and is needed to successfully locate callers and deploy appropriate resources quickly to quickly save lives in our communities.

Johnson County supports the proposed changes in SB 420.

Training Standards

Johnson County Emergency Management & Communications supports recommending training standards. Highly trained and skilled public safety telecommunicators are required to use the technology in our centers and, more importantly, deliver quality customer service and first response prior to arrival of responders in the field. We believe that it is critical to ensure that telecommunicators who are answering the calls for service across the state

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are trained to the same minimum levels in their specific discipline. Many 911 centers across Kansas have already expended several thousands of dollars to meet the current training standards as recommended by the Kansas 911 Coordinating Council and adopted by the full Council in 2015.

The minimum recommend training standards were developed and are in concert with existing Public Safety Telecommunicator training standards such as the Association of Public Safety Communications (APCO), the International Academies of Emergency Dispatch (IAED), and the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). Currently 35 states have a training and certification process for public safety telecommunicators.

The Kansas 911 Act must consider all facets of 911, including the training of personnel and technology. The Kansas Legislature in 2011 found training important enough that it was included in the existing Kansas 911 Act and we would request that the current Legislature consider either adding it back into this 911 Act or support separate legislation to address training needs.

Thank you for this opportunity to present this testimony on an important public safety issue affecting jurisdictions of all sizes in Kansas. I would welcome any questions that you may have of me.

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