

9-1-1 Bill to Fund Modernization of Statewide 9-1-1 System

The Bill will Fund the Modernization of the Statewide 9-1-1 System and Address Needs at the State and Local Government Levels

- Increase the State 9-1-1 excise tax from \$.20 to .25 to modernize the statewide 9-1-1 network to an Internet Protocol Network. This will replace existing 1960's technology that only works for voice. The new 9-1-1 system will be able to interface with modern voice and data communications devices, like text messaging, pictures, video, and automatic collision notification from vehicles, meeting the public's expectations of the system.
- Increase the County 9-1-1 excise tax from \$.50 to up to \$.70 to assist with the 9-1-1 equipment upgrades that are necessary in order to accept emergency calls and data from the new system.
- Expand the 9-1-1 excise taxes to Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP), so users of this service that can call 9-1-1 share in the funding of the system.
- Overall 9-1-1 excise tax rates have not changed since 1992, and inflation has eroded their buying power by 38% in that time.
- In addition to the 9-1-1 taxes, local governments currently contribute 64% of the costs of operating the 9-1-1 system from local government funds.
- This bill will restore the funds lost to inflation, reducing the need for local governments to contribute even more funding to the 9-1-1 system.

Who Will Benefit from this Bill

- All Counties and the State will benefit by extending the 911 excise tax to VoIP subscribers who access 9-1-1 but for the most part do not pay to support the 9-1-1 system costs. This will produce urgently needed revenue.
- The 650,000 deaf, hard of hearing and speech impaired residents who live in Washington State have taken advantage of advancements in communications technology to improve their lives, but they cannot text 9-1-1 for help when they have an emergency. The existing outdated 9-1-1 system cannot accept text messages, but the new modernized 9-1-1 system will have this capability.
- Additional vulnerable groups that will be better served by the flexibility of the modernized 9-1-1 system include seniors, children and teens, and domestic violence victims.

Advantages for Telecommunications and Communications Carriers

- Ensures wireline, wireless, and VoIP services all pay the same tax and contribute equally to the funding of the 9-1-1 system.
- Immunity for all carriers providing voice or data to 9-1-1.
- A single point of remittance for both the state and county 9-1-1 taxes, and the use of wire transfer to the Department of Revenue, streamlining the remittance and accounting process.

The Bill will Provide Accountability

- Counties and State required to report annually on funds spent to modernize and operate the 9-1-1 system.
- State 9-1-1 Program Office required to annually recommend the rate of the State 9-1-1 excise taxes to the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission.
- Extension of the State 9-1-1 Advisory Committee to ensure the coordination of the 9-1-1 system statewide.
- State 9-1-1 Advisory Committee required to report annually to the legislature on progress towards greater efficiencies in 9-1-1 operations.