



**TESTIMONY OF SCOTT A. EKBERG,
BEFORE THE
HOUSE ENERGY, UTILITIES AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE
REPRESENTATIVE JOE SEIWERT, CHAIR
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2018**

Good morning Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee. I am Scott Ekberg, NG911 Administrator for the Kansas 911 Coordinating Council (Council). Thank you so much for the opportunity to be here this morning to provide testimony in support of HB2084. We are at a critical point with the funding of the statewide solution to Next Generation 911. If we fail in getting this bill passed and in increasing funding for the solution, we will be forced to shift responsibility for funding the system from the users of the system to local government tax payers.

The Council asserts that the proposed changes are critical to the future of Kansas NG911. The independent Legislative Post Audit completely corroborates that position. The 911 Call Centers endorse our position. And, perhaps most importantly, the residents of Kansas will benefit significantly from the changes contained in the bill.

I will highlight 3 areas this morning in regard to Next Generation 911 and HB2084.

1st - What is NG911?

2nd - Why are we migrating to NG911 and why is it important?

3rd - Financial sustainability of the Kansas NG911 system

First, what is NG911? In the most simple of terms, NG911 is the replacement of an antiquated, analog communications network, the legacy 911 network, with an all-digital, high-speed, data centric, network, the next generation 911 network. NG911 is an evolving technological ecosystem that accounts for the technologies of today but that also provides a foundation for new technologies of tomorrow. This upgrade will allow callers to communicate with 911 centers in the ways in which they are accustomed and expect, while speeding response times to emergency events. NG911 allows for the delivery of increased data to the 911 center including pictures, video, and text.

The Council was charged with shepherding Kansas to NG911 by the Kansas 911 Act in 2011. As a means of meeting this duty, the Council procured NG911 as a service, rather than as a capital purchase. The system that has been stood up is the most cost-effective approach to the migration to NG911 that exists. The network design requires a fraction of the equipment and associated network circuitry. A broad-brushed, conservative comparison of the costs of the statewide system as opposed to each of the 89 PSAPs currently operating on the system



acquiring NG911 capabilities on their own, shows that the statewide system is less than half the price of the standalone solution.

Secondly, why are we migrating to NG911, and more importantly, why does it matter? Text messaging, video messaging, picture messaging, social media chat, and video calling are all now routine forms of communication. Kansas residents have embraced these alternative forms of communication and expect to be able to communicate with 911 as they do daily with their families and friends. We must meet their expectations if we are to maintain their support and confidence in public safety.

But why is NG911 important? Because it saves lives and property. NG911 technology saves lives and property by enhancing the speed of call delivery and response, by increasing the location accuracy of the call, and by better informing the emergency response teams of the nature of the event. Let me give you an example, in a cardiac arrest or arterial bleeding call, the seconds saved through NG911 technology could easily mean the difference between life and death.

The other reason that we began this migration to NG911 was because of the state of 911 in Kansas at the time. In 2015, nearly the entire state was operating on failing and end-of-life equipment. This problem had to be addressed just to keep 911 service viable. Now, 3½ years later, we have a complete state that is either IP capable or on ESInet. The 2011 911 legislation, which created the NG911 migration initiative, can be credited for the progress that Kansas has made.

Finally, let's address the financial sustainability of the Kansas NG911 System. HB2084 will ensure the financial sustainability of NG911. Right now, we are spending more money than we are bringing in. Reserve funds transferred from the Kansas Wireless Advisory Board under the prior 911 legislation, have been used to offset this overage. Unfortunately, those reserves will be exhausted in 2020. HB2084 provides the funding necessary to sustain the existing level of service and enhance that service for the next five to ten years.

The news of the need for increased funding cannot come as a surprise. Since 2013 there have been three Legislative Post Audits conducted and each one has identified the 911 fee revenue as insufficient. The latest LPA report, after having reviewed the Council's business case and finding it to be "be reasonably and properly constructed" found that continuation of operation of the NG911 System, at the current funding level was not sustainable. It further reported that the business case supported an increase to \$1.05. After considerable analysis to identify the lowest rate that covered the expenses of sustaining the system, funding the future enhancements identified within the next five years, and savings towards one-time costs associated with executing a new contract in 2025, we came to the current proposal of an increase to \$1.03.

The bottom line is that with passage of the increased fee:



- The legislative vision of statewide NG911 will be continued.
- The Kansas NG911 system will be enhanced
- PSAPs will receive the money that they need for maintaining and upgrading ancillary system equipment and providing personnel training
- Kansas NG911 will be on firm financial footing that will carry the Council and Kansas PSAPs into the future for the next 5 years, and perhaps the next 10 years.

Without passage of the increased fee:

- By 2020, the Kansas NG911 System cannot financially afford to continue operations
- Migration to full NG911 will have to be suspended and the system will remain stagnant
- Approximately \$4 million in additional funding will be needed annually to bridge the shortfall and will, by necessity, have to come from the PSAP workstation fee. This will result in workstation fees having to nearly double.
- PSAPs will not have sufficient 911 funds to cover these increased fees, so property taxes will have to be relied on to make up the shortfall.

Thank you for this opportunity, I truly appreciate it and I would stand for any questions.