

KANSAS

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**Testimony on SCR 1616
to
Senate Utilities Committee**

**Presented by
Colonel William R. Seck
Kansas Highway Patrol**

February 4, 2004

Good morning, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. My name is Colonel William Seck, and I appear before you on behalf of the Kansas Highway Patrol and in my role as Chairman of Governor Sebelius' Homeland Security Council in support of SCR 1616.

As Americans, we have all become very aware of the need to enhance homeland security and its importance to the safety of our country since September 11, 2001. As first responders and members of Kansas' ongoing homeland security effort, the Kansas Highway Patrol has joined its partners across our state and nation to ensure the safety and well being of the citizens we serve. And while we continue to strive to be the best at being prepared for the unknown, we know that we will always be making adjustments to vital components of the overall system.

SCR 1616 addresses one of these components. In fact, communications interoperability is one of the most vital components that have been identified. As you will hear from testimony today, interoperability means that public safety agencies, including law enforcement, firefighters, and emergency medical services, can talk to one another via radio communication systems exchanging voice and or data on demand, in real time, during an event. While television shows and big screen movies depict emergency response agencies communicating effortlessly on a regular basis, the truth is many public safety communication systems across this country lack interoperability. Unfortunately, Kansas is one of the many states that lack statewide interoperability.

As Superintendent of the Patrol and Chairman of Governor Sebelius' Council on Homeland Security, I am here to tell you that our lack of interoperability is a serious public safety problem that severely undermines the capabilities of law enforcement, firefighters, emergency medical services and other first responders to respond to and manage emergency situations. Whether it be a five-vehicle multi-fatality motor vehicle crash, a tornado that passes through a Kansas community or a domestic or international terrorist attack on Kansas' soil, communications interoperability or the lack thereof will quickly determine how rapidly we are able to bring the situation to successful resolution. Tragically, it can also become a matter of life or death.

As leaders in this great state, it is our responsibility to take the lead on developing a statewide system that will meet our response needs. And while this issue has always been of concern to many of us, none of us can dismiss the fact that its immediacy has significantly increased since 9-11.

I want to recognize and commend the Kansas Department of Transportation and Secretary Deb Miller for their dedication to resolving this issue. It is very apparent that KDOT has identified the issues specific to interoperability and have developed an initiative that works toward providing the tools crucial to first responders. Again, as Kansas leaders, it is imperative we all support KDOT's efforts and help to facilitate the process of achieving our goals.

While KDOT's initiative works toward one goal, certain aspects of this initiative have addressed issues that have been discussed for a number of years:

- c Local jurisdictions have always been concerned about buying into a statewide system that had no direction from the state. **The KDOT initiative provides the necessary direction.**
- c Costs for participation in a statewide system have always been a concern for local jurisdictions. **KDOT's initiative provides financing options to acquire the necessary equipment that include leasing and payment plans.**
- c Allowing commercial access to the system can mitigate overall costs. **KDOT has recognized that this could reduce the costs to the state and any jurisdiction that wants to participate.**
- c Funding has always been a delaying factor for this initiative. **KDOT's plan provides a "fast track" in development of a statewide system.**

Recently, the Homeland Security Council had an opportunity to hear a presentation given by KDOT on their initiative to address interoperability. I can tell you the Council is very supportive of KDOT's plan and will do all that it can to assist. It has since become apparent that many others are dedicated to this initiative as well after

Council received letters of support. I have attached copies of those letters to my testimony for your review. Agencies and organizations that have made contact are:

- c Butler County Emergency Services Association
- c Kansas Emergency Management Association (KEMA)
- c Kansas Chapter of the Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials, International (APCO)
- c Kansas State Association of Fire Chiefs
- c Board of Emergency Medical Services
- c Kansas Peace Officer's Association (KPOA)
- c Kansas Sheriff's Association (KSA)
- c Kansas Association of Chief's of Police (KACP)

Mr. Chairman and members of this committee, this initiative will be one of the most important endeavors we, who are responsible for Homeland Security, will take to ensure the safety of Kansans. The Kansas Highway Patrol and the Governor's Homeland Security Counsel fully support SCR 1616 for the safety benefits it provides. In closing, the Patrol appreciates the opportunity to address you today and urges this committee to give SCR 1616 a favorable report. I will be happy to stand for any questions you might have.

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