

Honorable Harry Green, Ph.D., Executive Director
Tennessee Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations
226 Capitol Boulevard Building, Suite 508
Nashville, TN 37243

Re: TACIR Study of House Bill 0204 / 911 Funding

Dear Dr. Green:

Thank you for the leadership of your office in undertaking a study of the bill introduced by State Senator Eric Stewart (SB 0208) and State Representative Judd Matheny (HB 0204), a bipartisan initiative concerning the life-saving, enhanced 9-1-1 service (E-911) upon which all citizens of our state depend in times of crisis and need. We thank you for inviting comment from the 911 community and the elected leadership of local governments, which are vitally involved, both operationally and financially. We recognize the positive aspects of the Stewart-Matheny legislation, foremost of which are:

- \$25,500,000 in new revenue, according to information provided by the General Assembly staff;
- All new revenue dedicated to Tennessee's 100 Districts (94 county & 6 municipal);
- \$3,750,000 additional revenue reserved for the 50 lowest population Districts;
- Rate adjustment protects revenue now retained by the Tennessee Emergency Communications Board (TECB), while securing amounts currently received by Districts.

We ask TACIR to recognize the seamless relationship among County & City governments and their respective 911 Districts. Local governments use property taxes to support dispatching operations, either directly by annual budget appropriation to a Sheriff or Police Department, or indirectly to Districts pursuant to an interlocal agreement, as is the case with the Coffee County.

We respectfully ask TACIR to acknowledge that the life-saving, enhanced 9-1-1 (E-911) service must be funded in a stable, consistent manner that enables the District to make necessary, long-term financial commitments for equipment and facilities, and support a professional staff adequate to fulfill the responsibilities imposed on the District by law and agreement. 911 fees should be adequate to pay all costs, so that property taxes are not required. Further, the current bifurcated rate structure that applies differing fees to the same 911 pathway should be unified into a single rate. The distinctions in fees between wireless and landline technologies, and within landlines between residential and commercial, are historical anomalies that should be resolved in favor of a single, adjustable rate that can meet changing needs and circumstances.

The District is a communications utility, declared by law to be a 'municipality and public corporation in perpetuity' at T.C.A. 7-86-106. As such, the District must be financially independent. Resolution of this goal is the over-riding, long-term improvement necessary to secure the vital public safety mission of the District. We encourage focus on these

recommendations, in addition to the immediate matter involving the Stewart-Matheny legislation, which we firmly support.

We lastly request TACIR to study all facets of the 'next generation' 911 project to validate whether the costs have benefits to Districts that are equal or greater in value, and to determine whether other parties, including the State of Tennessee, will benefit from the project and should share in costs, proportionately. The TECB has been impounding 911 wireless fees for the NG-911 project, which fees otherwise would be received by Districts.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Pennington". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "D".

COFFEE COUNTY MAYOR, DAVID PENNINGTON