

Editorial: Senate Budget Proposing to Raid 911 Funding

Local News

Posted by: David Haviland

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OLYMPIA, Wash. - The Senate Ways & Means Committee Thursday night passed SSB5034, the Senate's budget recommendation for 2013 - 2015. This budget contains a significant (over \$15 million) raid of 911 funding from the state 911 account. The disregard shown by the use of citizen funds designated for 911 for projects outside 911 deeply concerns the Chapter, for both the raid of tax-generated funds and the erosion of public trust in the 911 system. To recap - SSB5034 takes over \$15,000,000 from a dedicated Enhanced 911 fund and utilizes 911 monies for non-911 items.

? \$10.8 Million to fund the Military Department

? \$3.5 Million to fund WSP Criminal History Technology Update

? \$2.0 Million to fund DOC (believed to be for radio infrastructure) Utilizing these funds for non-911 purposes is in direct conflict with the purposes of the excise tax that each citizen pays, every month on their phone bill. The public trusts us to use the money in accordance with its intended purpose, which is the operation and modernization of the 911 system statewide. This raid erodes the safety net for the citizens of Washington - and delays the ability to ensure NG911 becomes available statewide and the 911 infrastructure remains stable. 911 Agencies have abided by the RCW and WAC and spent funding appropriately, as good stewards of the citizens' money, making plans to work towards equipment centralization in order to be more cost effective and financially efficient in trying economic times. The actions of the Ways & Means Committee are not what is expected of Washington's elected officials.

With the House set to release its budget next week, the Chapter urges their support in keeping 911 funds for 911 and discourages any diversion of 911 funds for other purposes, keeping public safety its highest priority.

Brenda Cantu, President
Washington State Chapter APCO – NENA
911 Carver Street
Bremerton, Washington 98312