

**HB22**

***Extend the sunset on wireless 9-1-1 funding for less populated counties***

HB
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HB 22

**Proponent Testimony by Becky Berger**

*State Information Technology Services Division (SITSD)  
 Department of Administration  
 444-1966*

***Before the  
 House Federal Relations, Energy, and Telecommunications Committee  
 January 10, 2011***

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, for the record my name is Becky Berger. I am the 9-1-1 Program Manager in the State Information Technology Services Division (SITSD), within the Department of Administration. The Statewide 9-1-1 Program is administered by the Department.

As you know, the bill is brought by the Energy and Telecommunications Interim Committee; it extends a sunset date benefiting low population rural areas from 2011 to 2015. Current law provides that 84% of the wireless enhanced 9-1-1 fees be distributed to cities and counties on a per capita basis. The remaining 16% is distributed evenly to counties that have 1% or less of the total population of the state. This "16% clause" allows those counties with less than 1% of the population to receive additional fees to help deploy wireless enhanced 9-1-1 services. Costs incurred by rural counties deploying wireless enhanced 9-1-1 are the same or sometimes higher than those incurred by larger counties. This provision is also applied to the wireless service providers that also incur higher costs in the rural areas.

Thirty one counties in Montana have less than 1% of the state's population. In today's mobile society, it is important that all areas of Montana have wireless enhanced 9-1-1. As our families, friends and co-workers travel Montana for work or pleasure, we have come to expect that if we dial 9-1-1, we will receive assistance. Montana 9-1-1 Centers and wireless service providers have made major progress in deploying wireless 9-1-1; however, rural areas still struggle due to lack of funding and resources.

The proposal before you today has been reviewed and endorsed by the 9-1-1 Advisory Council, the Montana Association of Counties, the Montana Fire Alliance and the Montana Sheriffs and Peace Officers Association.

This bill does not increase any fees, there are no additional FTEs and there is no impact to the general fund. Thank you to Representative Klock for sponsoring this legislation and I urge your support. I am available to answer any questions.

Thank you.