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Testimony before the Senate Committee on Licensing, Constitution and Federalism

Senator André Jacque

March 21, 2023

Members of the Senate Committee on Licensing, Constitution and Federalism:

In the creation of the 2009-11 state budget, Governor Doyle and the Democrat-controlled legislature included what is known as the “Police and Fire Protection Fee.”

This fee is currently imposed on two types of transactions: 1) 38 cents on the bill when you purchase a phone plan 2) 75 cents per line on the monthly phone bill.

Most of us want to support our police and firefighters. Creating a small fee on our phone bills to do so is justifiable. But there is a major issue if those funds are not going to police and fire protection, which is what has been occurring.

Police and fire chiefs cannot even say how that money is spent because it goes into the state’s general fund, ostensibly to support Shared Revenue- which does not exclusively pay for emergency services.

These dollars can be spent on a variety of services and projects at the municipal level, and a municipality can easily allocate those funds elsewhere if they choose to not fund their community’s emergency response teams. That is not how the fee’s revenue should be administered.

This constitutional amendment, on first consideration, does not establish any fees, but would require that any revenues from an appropriate fee be deposited into a specific police and fire protection fund, in which the funds can only be used for county and municipal police and fire protection services.

Thank you for your consideration of Senate Joint Resolution 13. I’m happy to answer any questions you may have.



SHAE SORTWELL

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 2nd ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Hearing Testimony
Senate Committee on Licensing, Constitution, and Federalism
March 21, 2023
Senate Joint Resolution 13

Chairman Jacque, my co-author, and members of the Senate Committee on Licensing, Constitution, and Federalism – Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak on SJR 13, relating to the creation of a police and fire fund, and the deposit of money into the fund.

In the creation of the 2009-11 state budget, Governor Doyle and the legislature included what is known as the “Police and Fire Protection Fee.” This fee is currently imposed on two types of transactions: 38 cents on the bill when you purchase a phone plan and 75 cents per line on the monthly phone bill.

Most of us want to support our police and firefighters and are accepting of a small fee. But there is a major issue if those funds are not going to police and fire protection, which is what has been occurring.

Police and fire chiefs cannot even say how that money is spent because it goes into the state’s general fund, first plucked by the Department of Military Affairs, and then funneled to shared revenue, which does not exclusively pay for emergency services. Since 2018, roughly \$55 million a year goes into shared revenue from the fund. These dollars can be spent on a variety of services and projects at the municipal level, and a municipality can easily allocate those dollars elsewhere if they choose not to fund their community’s emergency response teams. That is not how the fee’s revenue should be administered.

This constitutional amendment (first consideration) does not establish any fees but would require that any revenues from an appropriate fee be deposited into a specific police and fire protection fund, in which the funds can only be used for county and municipal police and fire protection services.

I appreciate the opportunity to testify on this legislation and would gladly answer any questions the committee may have.

March 21, 2023
2023 SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 13

Melvin (Bob) Frank

Chair of the State 9-1-1 subcommittee

Appointed to the 9-1-1 subcommittee in January 2018. I have been the chair since the beginning of the sub-committee.

911 started out as being able to identify what number was calling 911. It then advanced to identifying the address of the caller. This was before cell phones. Next came wireless phones for landlines. You could walk around your neighborhood and make calls. If you called 9-1-1 the telecommunicator had no idea where you were.

Then cell phones. In the early years of cell phones when you called 911 from your cell phone, the call was redialed to a 10 digit phone number. The telecommunicator had no idea if it was a 911 call or not. Cell phones and technology advanced faster than 911 could keep up. Cell phone/911 adapted using old existing technology so the telecommunicator could tell what side of the tower a cell call was accessing but in many case could not easily locate the caller.

Add in IP phones calls made over an Internet Protocol (VoIP). This technology again advanced beyond current 911 technology of the time. The VoIP system requires the user to have the phone registered with an address. If they move the phone and do not update the address, telecommunicators have no idea where they are.

Technology has moved faster than 911. When cell phones came out telecommunicators could not locate the caller. There are numerous times technology has advanced ahead of 911 technology.

Thankfully Wisconsin is on the right track by building a State wide ESInet. The strong dedication of the Office of Emergency Communications under Department of Military Affairs has provided Public Safety Answering Points (PSAP) and the Telecommunicators the, first-first responders, the tools and availability to connect to a State wide ESInet. The ESInet brings Wisconsin into a digital platform to handle all type of callers. The ESInet and grants to PSAPs funded by the police and fire protection fund are showing the results the fund was designed to provide.

My concerns,

1. Line 8 " communications providers on each communications service connection with an assigned telephone number, including a communications service provided via a voice over Internet protocol connection, shall be designated the police and fire protection fee.

Can you call 911 from an app that is not assigned a phone number? What is the next generation of communication that will advance ahead of 911?

My concern with this section is it limits the fee to phone numbers. Are there devices in the future that won't use a phone number to call? How about a new type of device, or a new App. How are we communicating now? Zoom, Signal or some other App

I would suggest something like "on any device that can call 911"

The mission statement of the State 911 subcommittee is:

March 21, 2023
2023 SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 13

Promote, assist, and make recommendations for the implementation of a public safety system where anyone can use one number, on any device, at any time, from anywhere, using any media to obtain a standard level of emergency service.

We choose this mission statement because device covers many options for the future.

2. I understand there is discussion about using the Police and Fire Protection fee to support communications beyond the PSAP. Communications to get the first responders to the location of the caller. What does this include? If this is a direction that is being looked at I suggest that funds be clearly separated within the fund for 911 and for other communications. FCC-21-80A1 page 40.

We have come such a long way with 911 in Wisconsin. I want to make sure we keep the progress going for the citizens and guests of Wisconsin.

Bob Frank
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