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To: Special Committee on 911 Communications
From: Curt Witynski, Assistant Director, League of Wisconsin Municipalities
Date: September 26, 2012
Re: Police and Fire Protection Fee

As you begin to discuss options for legislation relating to 911 communications, the League of Wisconsin Municipalities urges you to carefully consider the ramifications of converting the police and fire protection fee into a 911 surcharge as some are proposing. The League strongly supports the current use of the P&FP fee revenues, which is to help fund the state's shared revenue program. In 2012, the P&FP will fund \$54 million of the \$753 million distributed to cities, villages, towns and counties through the shared revenue program. In other words, 7.2 percent of the program is funded by the P&FP.

The shared revenue program provides state tax dollars to cities, villages, towns and counties to help pay for local services like police and fire protection. In 2012, cities, villages and towns will receive \$630 million through this program. Counties will receive \$123 million.

The state shared revenue program is a key component of Wisconsin's state and local relationship. It is also an important part of the state's overall program of property tax relief. Unfortunately, during the last ten years funding for the program was reduced three times to address state fiscal difficulties. Shared revenue payments to cities and villages were cut by \$57.6 million in 2004, by \$23 million in 2010, and by \$48 million in 2012.

Shared revenue is an equitable, efficient way to help fund police, fire, street maintenance, and other critical local services. It is crucial that shared revenue be maintained and program funding be restored to its previous levels, not reduced further.

The League fears that converting the P&FP to a 911 surcharge will cause further reductions in shared revenue. Because of strict state limits on annual municipal levy increases, municipalities are unable to raise property taxes to make up cuts in shared revenue.

Up to date 911 systems do us no good if there are not enough police and fire fighters to be dispatched.

Thanks for considering our comments.