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WSTA and WCA Applaud Joint Committee on Finance Vote on 911 Modernization

Madison - The Wisconsin State Telecommunications Association (WSTA) and Wisconsin Counties Association (WCA) applaud today's unanimous vote by the Joint Committee on Finance taking steps toward modernizing Wisconsin's 911 infrastructure.

Representative Mary Felzkowski (R-Irma) and Senator Sheila Harsdorf (R-River Falls) authored the budget motion to create a statewide digital 911 network that will replace Wisconsin's obsolete analog 911 network.

"This is a win for public safety and a significant step toward the implementation of Next Generation 911 (NG911) in Wisconsin," said Bill Esbeck, executive director of WSTA. "We commend Representative Felzkowski and Senator Harsdorf, as well as JCF Co-Chairs Darling and Nygren, for their leadership on this issue and believe the action of the committee today will go a long way in modernizing the 911 network here in Wisconsin."

The budget motion requires the state to solicit bids for the creation, operation and maintenance of an emergency services IP network (ESInet). The statewide ESInet will replace Wisconsin's outdated analog 911 network with an all-digital, fiber network. When fully operational, the NG911 ESInet will be capable of transmitting voice calls, text messages, pictures and videos. The motion also requires the creation of the ESInet to rely on existing infrastructure to the greatest extent feasible.

"Wisconsin counties place a high priority on public safety and understand the importance of upgrading our 911 infrastructure," said Mark D. O'Connell, executive director of WCA. "Today's action is a critical step to ensure the security and reliability of our 911 system and we look forward to working with the legislature on this issue as the budget makes it way through the process."

In addition, the budget motion directs that revenue collected from the Police and Fire Protection Fund will support the creation, operation and maintenance of the ESInet. The budget motion also calls for the creation of a 19 member 911 Subcommittee that will advise the state on the transition to NG911.

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