

memorandum

DATE: March 3, 2004

TO: Senator Stan Clark, Chairperson and
Members
Senate Committee on Utilities

FROM: DAVID LAKE

RE: HB2756

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee; Thank You for the opportunity to provide supporting testimony for House Bill 2756. I am presenting this testimony not only as the Administrator for the State Board of EMS but also as the chairperson of the Kansas Public Safety Communications Committee.

Very shortly after the horrendous events of September 11, 2001; former Governor Graves asked state agencies to identify vulnerabilities to consider in planning for the safety of the State in the event of a terrorist event. The Board of EMS is a regulatory agency that oversees the licensed

ambulance services and provides technical support as requested. We do not treat or transport patients so it is hard to imagine that our agency would be much of a target. My report to the Governor's office and the Joint Committee on Homeland Security reflected those thoughts but I did stress a statewide concern that in the event of a mass-casualty incident, regardless of the cause, the ability to communicate among responding agencies was a major concern and has the great potential for delaying the prompt mitigation of the event. At the present time in almost every community in Kansas, Law Enforcement, Emergency Medical Services, Fire Service, Public Health, and Public Utilities all communicate by radio on different frequencies and lack the ability to readily communicate with each other when necessary. Mine was not the only agency to recognize and mention this concern. The result was the establishment of the Kansas Public Safety Communications Committee. Of primary concern to this committee is the issue of inter-agency interoperability; the ability for multiple agencies to communicate through wireless transmission of voice and data.

I believe there are two questions we need to ask with regard to this issue: 1) How important is wireless interoperability of voice and data to the public safety/service providers of Kansas?; and, 2) Is it necessary to have this capability on a 24 hours/day, 7 days a week basis? Our committee and my agency believes the answer to both questions is a resounding YES.

To provide "round the clock", statewide coverage and capability, there needs to be a single system (infrastructure) that allows for the inclusion of all interested public safety agencies.

The present 800 MHz system developed by KDOT, with continued development, has this potential.

While several municipalities have established their own 800 MHz system, most others have not and are reluctant to become a part of the State's system. The leading reasons given are the cost of equipment and no assurance that the system will be universally adopted. The plan proposed by KDOT addresses the issue of a statewide system by establishing a statewide communications plan. HB2756 addresses the issue of costs by establishing a fund to assist local entities in the acquisition of communications equipment.

In closing, I ask that you act favorably on HB2756 in supporting KDOT and the statewide public safety desire for a system that allows for wireless interoperability. I will be glad to respond to any questions you may have with regard to this issue.