

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL AFFAIRS STANDING COMMITTEE

March 20, 2018

8:04 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Justin Parish, Co-Chair
Representative Harriet Drummond
Representative John Lincoln
Representative Dan Saddler
Representative David Talerico

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Tiffany Zulkosky, Co-Chair
Representative George Rauscher
Representative DeLena Johnson (alternate)
Representative Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins (alternate)

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

HOUSE BILL NO. 385

"An Act relating to multi-line telephone systems."

- HEARD & HELD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HB 385

SHORT TITLE: ENHANCED 911: MULTI-LINE TELEPHONE SYSTEMS

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) GRENN

02/21/18	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/21/18	(H)	L&C, FIN
03/14/18	(H)	CRA REPLACES L&C REFERRAL
03/14/18	(H)	BILL REPRINTED 3/14/18
03/20/18	(H)	CRA AT 8:00 AM BARNES 124

WITNESS REGISTER

REPRESENTATIVE JASON GRENN
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: As prime sponsor, presented HB 385.

SHEA SIEGERT, Staff

Representative Jason Grenn
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented the summary of substantive changes from the original bill version to Version D of HB 385, and responded to questions, on behalf of Representative Grenn, prime sponsor.

EMILY NAUMAN, Deputy Director
Legislative Legal and Research Services
Legislative Affairs Agency
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions during the hearing on HB 385.

DAVID GIBBS, Director
Emergency Operations
Fairbanks North Star Borough
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered a question during the hearing on HB 385.

JILL DOLAN, Borough Attorney
Fairbanks North Star Borough
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Responded to a question during the hearing on HB 385.

KATHI WASSERMAN, Executive Director
Alaska Municipal League
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 385.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[8:04:15 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR JUSTIN PARISH called the House Community and Regional Affairs Standing Committee meeting to order at 8:04 a.m. Representatives Drummond, Talerico, and Parish were present at the call to order. Representatives Saddler and Lincoln arrived as the meeting was in progress.

HB 385-ENHANCED 911: MULTI-LINE TELEPHONE SYSTEMS

[8:04:46 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR PARISH announced that the only order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 385, "An Act relating to multi-line telephone systems."

8:05:23 AM

REPRESENTATIVE JASON GRENN, Alaska State Legislature, as prime sponsor, presented HB 385. He paraphrased the sponsor statement, which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

Alaskan residents have relied on dialing 911 to reach local emergency services for decades. Enhanced 911 (E911) is a service that automatically displays the telephone number and physical location of the 911 caller on the emergency operator's screen. This is unlike Basic 911 service, where the distressed caller must tell the operator where he or she is calling from. E911 is crucial in circumstances where the caller cannot communicate their whereabouts, as it ensures the operator is still able to send emergency response services to the correct location. With the advancement of technology, E911 has significantly improved the effective delivery of critical public safety and emergency response services across the State.

There is a large segment of E911 end-users in Alaska using Multi-Line Telephone Systems (MLTS). These systems do not have the same level of E911 safety protections as small business and residential systems. MLTS connects dozens, hundreds, or thousands of "extension" phones to a central, computerized telephone "switchboard". MLTS are frequently used by government agencies, banks, hotels, health care facilities, and schools.

When individuals call 911 from a phone in Multi-Line Telephone System, that system may only relay the physical street address of the facility's main building or the address of the building in which the MLTS is located. However, it may not provide more specific information about where the distressed individual is physically located, such as a building number, floor number, or room number. When callers are also unable to provide their specific location, because they are either unaware of their exact

location or are physically unable to convey the information, emergency responders face avoidable delays that can result in tragedies.

House Bill 385 will help ensure 911 dispatchers receive accurate location information so emergency responders will not be delayed while trying to find the emergency caller in need. HB 385 gives municipalities the option to require MLTS operators in their region to provide an Automatic Location Information (ALI) record for every telephone capable of dialing 911. By automatically providing specific location information through the 911 system, emergency operators can immediately dispatch fire, police, or EMS responders to the caller's location, even when that person is incapacitated. This requirement would apply only to new MLTS installations or upgrades to an existing MLTS.

Alaskans depend on fast and reliable access to public safety resources when faced with emergency situations.

I urge your support for House Bill 385.

[8:08:37 AM](#)

SHEA SIEGERT, Staff, Representative Jason Grenn, Alaska State Legislature, presented the summary of substantive changes from the original bill version to Version D, which read as follows [original punctuation provided, with some formatting changes]:

Section 1 - Lines 4 through 8

The changes to this provision provide for an opt-in mechanism for municipalities to enforce implementation of the following provisions in this bill after January 1st, 2019.

Section 2 - (f) - Lines 17 through 18

This change removes the Regulatory Commission of Alaska from adopting regulations to implement and enforce the provisions of this bill.

MR. SIEGERT explained that in reading through a Regulatory Commission of Alaska (RCA) docket, R-5-05, the sponsor found that a large conflict the RCA was running into was finding a waiver provision for the state as a whole that would not put burden on one community while benefiting another. He said the

sponsor proposes giving municipalities the flexibility to regulate and enforce the provisions under HB 385.

MR. SIEGERT noted that "things have been moved around" from the original bill version to Version D, and he related that Ms. Nauman from Legislative Legal and Research Services was available to speak to that issue.

[8:11:21 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND asked what currently keeps a municipality, borough, or another government entity from implementing the E911.

MR. SIEGERT offered his understanding that municipalities do not have the requisite authority to implement E911. He said enforcing implementation means passing an ordinance which states that if there is an MLTS system in a building, the building owner would be responsible to provide an automatic location point for each telephone that dwells within the building. He deferred to Ms. Nauman for further comment.

[8:12:36 AM](#)

EMILY NAUMAN, Deputy Director, Legislative Legal and Research Services, Legislative Affairs Agency, stated that it can be beneficial for a municipality to have explicit statutory authority for this type of ordinance in order to avoid ambiguity as to whether the municipality is allowed to enact or enforce such an ordinance.

[8:13:10 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR PARISH asked if presently home rule municipalities would have the authority while other types of municipalities may not.

MS. NAUMAN said she does not know, but she offered to seek an answer.

CO-CHAIR PARISH requested Ms. Nauman do so.

[8:13:39 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked about the history of 911 in Alaska.

[8:13:58 AM](#)

MR. SIEGERT said he would contact John Rockwell, director of 911 services, to get an answer. In response to a follow-up question, he offered his understanding that 911 is operated by the state, and municipalities implement it with 911 dispatch. He further offered his understanding that there are federal, state, and municipal laws and ordinances related to 911 systems, under which there are regulations. In response to another question, he said the sponsor received word from the Fairbanks North Star Borough that it would implement E911 almost immediately. He said every Alaskan would benefit from HB 385. Children calling 911, who many not know a room number, would not have to describe the room they are in during an emergency situation, and response from first responders and dispatch could be more immediate.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER noted that Section 2 of the proposed legislation lays out specific statutory requirements regarding sign postage distance of five feet and in contrasting colors, and he questioned why the sponsor chose to include that in statute rather than leaving it up to regulation.

MR. SIEGERT responded that the bill sponsor decided on specificity. He noted that in Section 1, there is a grandfather clause, and because those grandfathered would not have an automatic location point, they would need to provide a highly visible sign. He mentioned there was a case in Texas that applies to this issue.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER noted that language on page 4, lines 18-19 [of the original bill version] would be the RCA authority to adopt regulations; therefore, he questioned why the sponsor would not leave the specificity to the RCA rather than listing it in statute.

MR. SIEGERT answered that the sponsor believes it is important to specify the exact information to prevent delay of emergency response.

[8:20:44 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR PARISH asked Mr. Siegert to relay the aforementioned background case in Texas.

MR. SIEGERT said a woman and her young daughter left the woman's husband and were staying at a hotel; the husband came to the hotel and physical abused the woman to the point where she was

unable to call for help; there were no specific and obvious instructions for reaching 911 posted in the hotel that facilitated the daughter in getting help; the mother died of her injuries as a result. Mr. Siegert clarified he was not saying that if a bill such as HB 385 had been in place in Texas the woman would have lived; however, he imparted that there is a nationwide movement to implement this sort of legislation since that case occurred.

[8:22:13 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked the sponsor if he thinks it is important for people to be able to call for help regardless of their ability to communicate clearly.

REPRESENTATIVE GRENN answered yes, that is the intent, to give additional information to emergency responders to reduce the time it takes to reach someone who needs help. He opined that this is a vital public safety need, and HB 385 is "a good start." In response to a follow-up question, he concurred that one of the goals of HB 385 is to help those who may not otherwise have the ability to call for help. He said his children were visiting him in the capitol last week, and although they know how to call 911, they would not have known his office number to give it to dispatch; therefore, [E911] would be helpful.

[8:24:17 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND expressed that she has resorted to calling the front desk in a hotel when she found it difficult to decipher the telephone system, and that was in a non-emergency situation; therefore, she said a universal system among all communication devices is a good idea.

[8:25:14 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked what the current status is when calling 911 from his cell phone.

MR. SIEGERT deferred to Mr. Gibbs.

[8:25:58 AM](#)

DAVID GIBBS, Director, Emergency Operations, Fairbanks North Star Borough, answered that the larger municipalities that have E911 generally have the ability to receive location information

from cellular phones. A variety of technologies are employed in order for public safety answering points or 911 centers to receive that information. In response to a follow-up question, he said depending on the cellular coverage, within the urban cores of Anchorage, Fairbanks, Juneau, Matanuska-Susitna, and Kenai, [response centers] will be able to see the location information of the cellular caller.

[8:27:08 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE TALERICO asked about the cost per unit of a new system and whether there was a funding source that might be available to help defer the cost.

MR. SIEGERT said he does not know, but can find out.

REPRESENTATIVE TALERICO said he would like to know the actual cost per system.

[8:28:18 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GRENN responded that the cost can range from zero to \$25 per device.

[8:28:50 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER concluded that that would be a significant cost. He remarked that technology changes frequently.

REPRESENTATIVE GRENN emphasized that he had said the cost could be "up to \$25," depending on the software being used. He speculated that for a hotel to upgrade its system for \$2,500 for 100 phones would be worth it in terms of knowing it has installed a great public safety device.

[8:31:05 AM](#)

MR. SIEGERT, in response to Representative Saddler, said President Donald Trump had signed Carrie's Law into effect about three weeks ago, a provision of which holds that after 2020, any MLTS system sold or manufactured in the United States must have the ability to use E911. He reiterated that there is a grandfather clause in Section 1 of the bill. To a follow-up question, he clarified that "upgrade" means when the entire MLTS system is upgraded. Addressing a former question, Mr. Siegert

read an excerpt from US House Resolution 582(b), System Installation Management and Operation, as follows:

A person engaged in the business of installing, managing, or operating multi-line telephone systems may not install, manage, or operate for use in the United States such a system, unless such system is configured such that a user may directly initiate a call to 911 from any station equipped with dialing facilities without dialing any additional digit code, prefix, or postfix...

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked if HB 385 would apply to military bases in Alaska. He surmised that those entities may have their own federal standards of communication and may or may not appreciate the imposition of the state's standards.

MR. SIEGERT responded yes, if the military bases have an MLTS system. In response to Co-Chair Parish, he amended his answer to offer his understanding that that would be in the event that the municipality to which the military base belongs passes an ordinance.

[8:34:50 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 8:34 a.m. to 8:35 a.m.

[8:35:40 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND moved that the committee adopt the proposed committee substitute (CS) for HB 385, Version 30-LS1456\D, Laffen, 3/5/18, as the working document.

[8:36:13 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR PARISH recapped the changes that would be made under Version D.

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER noted he had been looking at the original bill when he had previously mentioned that the RCA had regulatory authority. He asked if that had been removed from Version D.

[8:36:59 AM](#)

MR. SIEGERT confirmed that that language had been removed from Version D. He explained the reason was that nearly every

provision in HB 385 was taken from the regulations from the RCA's ten-year docket, open from 2005-2015, named R-5-05. He reiterated his earlier opening comments about giving local control to municipalities.

[8:38:03 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR PARISH announced that there being no objection, Version D was before the committee as a working document.

[8:38:46 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 8:38 a.m. to 8:40 a.m.

[8:40:09 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR PARISH announced he would move next to invited testimony.

[8:40:43 AM](#)

JILL DOLAN, Borough Attorney, Fairbanks North Star Borough, responded to a question previously heard as to whether a home rule municipality would be distinguished from a second-class borough such as Fairbanks. She stated that one of the specific restrictions in the Title 29 on home rule powers is related to the E911 system. She explained that there are federal laws and FCC rules providing the universal 911 calling numbers, and those rules often requirement carriers to deliver 911 calls to specific public safety answering points. She said it is up to the state as to whether the E911 system is done at a statewide or local level. Fairbanks has the local program through the Title 29 legislation, which applies equally to home rule or any other kind of organized municipality. She said she does not think there is a distinction currently between the two. She said, "This is the enabling legislation for all of us to implement our enhanced 911 systems at the local level."

[8:42:17 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked Ms. Dolan to clarify whether Fairbanks, Alaska, currently has the E911 system.

MS. DOLAN answered that FNSB does have the system, but it does not currently have specific legislation requiring the multi-line telephone system operators to provide the specific location information that would be implemented under HB 385. In response

to a follow-up question, Ms. Dolan related that in setting up the current E911 system in Fairbanks, the borough has had problems with one specific service provider, which required court action to resolve the issue. Typically speaking, she opined that the system works well. The borough has a central answering center for its E911 system. She offered there are other E911 systems throughout Alaska, including in Anchorage, Juneau, Kenai, and Matanuska-Susitna; it means the delivery of specific location information with the call. To a further question, she credited Mr. Gibbs, the emergency operations director for FNSB, for being responsible for the system that FNSB currently has. She surmised Mr. Gibbs could speak more to the reasons behind the system.

8:45:35 AM

MR. GIBBS said as part of his duties, he serves as the 911 system administrator for FNSB. He related that FNSB supports HB 385. He said the borough has identified this issue as one of its legislative priorities. He stated that multi-line telephone systems are used in FNSB, both by public and private entities, including the University of Alaska Fairbanks, numerous hotels, the borough government offices, big box stores, and schools. He said one issue that has been identified is that FNSB does not have good location information for the devices used to access 911. He referred to a handout in the committee packet he had provided, in which is a graphic illustrating that there are hundreds, if not thousands, of telephone devices from UAF that when 911 is called, the address resolves to a single switch location at 1054 University Avenue. He said this also includes the Poker Flats Rocket Range, which is 30 miles away from that address. He said the impetus for HB 385 is that FNSB has had multiple examples of emergency responders being delayed because they were at a dispatch to the wrong building at a large campus or had to embark on a service in a large hotel.

8:48:00 AM

MR. GIBBS stated one benefit of HB 385 is that it would require that multi-line 911 system information be transmitted directly to the 911 call center and not to a security desk, which is what a lot of places do. He said a security desk may be attended by a person who is either ill-trained or ill-equipped to handle the call. He stressed the importance of requiring multi-line system operators have systems that will allow a caller to dial without an additional prefix, such as an 8 or 9.

MR. GIBBS, in response to previous questions, proffered that E911 has been around in Fairbanks since the late 1980s; however, there are places in the Northwest Arctic that do not have even the basic 911 service. He echoed Ms. Dolan's remark that many municipalities in Alaska have already employed E911 systems. He speculated that anyone who has already implemented E911 would probably be taking a good look at implementing an ordinance for a multi-line telephone system. He offered his understanding that the Anchorage Police Department is interested and would most likely be willing to testify. Mr. Gibbs said the cost would range from zero, if someone were to enter the information directly into an existing 911 location database, to approximately \$3,500 for an enhanced switch for very large multi-line telephone systems. He said a lot of companies employ third-party service providers; therefore, the cost can be fairly large depending on the size of the facility and the number of access lines. Mr. Gibbs concluded by encouraging the committee to support HB 385.

[8:50:54 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked what "pretty large" would be.

MR. GIBBS said he could not estimate how large the cost could be regarding those companies that subscribe to a third-party service, but he said the cost would be on a per device basis. In response to a follow-up question, he relayed that for "wire-line 911," which is for residential and commercial telephones, the information is maintained by the telephone company providing phone service. If someone moves or a customer is added or dropped, that information is an automated process that updates daily. The multi-line telephone systems have two databases. One is maintained by the operator, who needs to know the location of each of the devices, and the others in the 911 automatic location information database, which he said is "kind of the crux of what we're doing here." He added, "That could be done by them simply having an automated link, as we do with telephone companies, where they just daily provide their moves, adds, or deletes to us, or they could go in periodically and make changes on a smaller system - they may not have many changes - so, we could give them authorization to actually access our system and update their records."

REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked, "So, the 911 database, that's a ... municipality database. Is that correct?"

MR. GIBBS answered that is correct.

[8:53:45 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR PARISH asked Mr. Gibbs if he is aware of any research correlating rates of positive or negative outcomes of emergency calls to the implementation of a multi-line system.

MR. GIBBS answered that he is aware of only anecdotal information but no performance metrics.

CO-CHAIR PARISH said he trusts Mr. Gigg's anecdotes, as well as those of other entities such as the Alaska Fire Chiefs Association, the Professional Fire Fighters Association, and the Fairbanks North Star Borough.

[8:55:32 AM](#)

KATHI WASSERMAN, Executive Director, Alaska Municipal League, testified that AML supports both changes outlined in Version D of HB 385. She expressed appreciation for the sponsor's and his staff's mention of local control, which is AML's main thrust for any legislation it supports. She ventured almost half of the organized municipalities in Alaska do not have an organized 911 service. She said a community she was from tried to get it, but all the rules and regulations regarding federal airwaves [make it difficult]. Ms. Wasserman stated that requiring a community to opt-out is "a lot of needless work" in a place such as Anaktuvuk Pass or Kobuk, when they cannot even get 911; therefore, she opined an opt-in system is much smarter. She said the RCA tends to be focused on Fairbanks, Anchorage, and Juneau and leave the other 160 communities "kind of out in the back." She advised that it is much easier when an issue like this is kept under local control. She stated, "I would hope that one day we would not have to go through all of this to allow a municipality to do what they think is good and safe for their residents." She stated that AML supports HB 385.

[8:58:17 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR PARISH opened public testimony on HB 385. After ascertaining that there was no one who wished to testify, he closed public testimony.

[8:59:12 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR PARISH announced that HB 385 was held over.

9:00:39 AM

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Community and Regional Affairs Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 9:01 a.m.