

**RESOLUTION R-2015-58  
LUZERNE COUNTY COUNCIL**

*A Resolution of the County of Luzerne, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Urging the Pennsylvania General Assembly to amend Chapter 53 of Title 35 of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, relating to Emergency Telephone Services (formerly the Public Safety Emergency Telephone Act, Act 78 of 1990).*

**WHEREAS**, recent public concerns about 911 service delivery prompted the Luzerne County Council to form an ad hoc inquiry committee which in its final report to council on April 14, 2015 determined the principal issue was to appropriately fund operations; and

**WHEREAS**, the Public Safety Emergency Telephone Act gave Pennsylvania county government responsibility for implementing and managing a system of 911 call taking on behalf of the citizens of the Commonwealth, setting in place planning processes, lines of authority between counties and Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) and a funding stream based on telephone subscriber surcharges; and

**WHEREAS**, Under counties' stewardship, Pennsylvania's 911 system is one of the best managed and up-to-date systems in the nation, with almost complete E-911 coverage (Enhanced 911, providing locator systems for wireline, wireless, and VoIP calls), the fewest Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) per capita among large states, and a commitment to moving toward Next Generation 911 (NG911) technologies.

**WHEREAS**, the 911 system faces significant challenges to meet rapidly changing technology requirements, a funding stream whose failure to keep pace with needs requires counties to rely both heavily and increasingly on the property tax, and the June 30, 2015, sunset of one key funding source, the wireless telephone surcharge; and

**WHEREAS**, the Act currently keys its planning, administrative, and audit functions separately to different communications technologies, inhibiting counties' ability to manage the system, to incorporate shared services, or to implement system efficiencies; and

**WHEREAS**, the intent of the original law was to fully fund counties' eligible 911 costs; and

**WHEREAS**, the current subscriber fee structure across the commonwealth is a monthly surcharge on wireline, wireless, and VoIP subscribers, ranging from \$1.00 to \$1.50 per month for wireline, and set at \$1.00 per month for wireless and VoIP; and

**WHEREAS**, the wireline fees have not changed since the Act's passage in 1990 and the wireless and VoIP fees, although adopted later, were keyed to the 1990 wireline rates, all of which, if adjusted for inflation alone, would mean fees of at least \$1.72; and

**WHEREAS**, Counties over the years have adapted and upgraded 911 systems to meet unanticipated technology change including locator systems, and are now actively planning upcoming technology needs including Next Generation 911 text, video, and other social media; and

**WHEREAS**, the onslaught of technological change was unforeseen and dramatically altered the ability of the funding structure to meet county needs, for both operating and capital costs; and

**WHEREAS**, the current funding structure covers only 68.5% percent, or \$4,550,000 of Luzerne County's cost to provide this vital service, with the remainder drawn from County property tax revenues; and

**WHEREAS**, the need to address the funding stream is immediate, and will reach crisis proportions if action is delayed past the June 30, 2015 expiration of the wireless telephone subscriber surcharge;

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, Luzerne County joins with the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania in support of a comprehensive rewrite of Chapter 53 of Title 35; and

**RESOLVED**, that Luzerne County supports a reform bill that is technology-neutral allowing counties to develop systems meeting current and future needs; and

**RESOLVED**, that Luzerne County supports a reform bill that combines planning, administrative, funding and audit provisions into a single consolidated whole, affording counties the best opportunity to manage effectively, facilitate shared services, incorporate system efficiencies, and readily adapt to new technologies and

**RESOLVED**, that Luzerne County supports a reform bill that increases 911 subscriber fees to a level that fully supports current and next generation operations, and which keys the fees to inflation or allows for other mechanisms to provide regular adjustments to meet system needs; and


**RESOLVED**, that a copy of this resolution be sent to the Luzerne County legislative delegation, to Governor Wolf, to the Director of the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency, and to the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania.

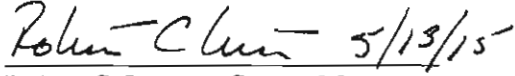
This Resolution shall become effective 6 days after adoption.

**ADOPTED** by the Council of the County of Luzerne, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, this 12th day of May, 2015.

LUZERNE COUNTY COUNCIL

ATTEST:   
Sharon Lawrence, Clerk of County Council

  
Linda McClosky Houck, Chair

 5/13/15  
Robert C. Lawton, County Manager