

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE IN
BEND
29 APRIL 2009

Good evening, my name is Doug Koellermeier, Deputy Fire Chief, City of Bend Fire Department. I am here wearing two quick hats if I could, please. My first hat is, as a native Oregonian I came up through the Oregon education system and now, in my role in public service and also serving in a number of capacities in Oregon fire service and teaching in our college system, I encourage your support of our college education system.

With my second hat, I am here to encourage you and encourage your support for the Oregon Wireless Interoperability Network, also known as OWIN. This is a critical infrastructure for our communications system here in Oregon and for emergency services. As you know, communications is one of the most critical components. In our daily operations and emergency services seconds count and emergency personnel are responding to hazardous situations. The OWIN project will drastically improve interoperability at the statewide, regional and local level. This will allow all responders to communicate effectively.

Good evening and thank you for coming. I'm Ryan Karjala, Division Chief of the Sisters-Camp Sherman Fire District. I'm also here to advocate for the OWIN project. OWIN would significantly increase the responder's and the citizen's safety. Right now we've got a portion of our Fire District that does not have any communications. It's on the Santiam Pass between Hoodoo and Mile Post 76 on Highway 22 down to Clear Lake and then at Mile Post 10 and towards Eugene. So we've got a significant amount of the Pass that does not have any communications at this point. OWIN would actually fill that gap for us. That's just one example of many that show why the project is an essential, statewide necessity for the State of Oregon.

To delay this project would not only increase the cost of the project over the long term but would also require local jurisdictions to upgrade their current communications systems which we now have to meet the requirement of the FCC in 2013. That's going to mean a significant amount of money that will go from the local area. Not meeting the FCC requirement mandate will result in a loss of radio frequencies and fines from the FCC that we don't want to see happen throughout the State. This essential, critical component means without having OWIN in place would have the possibility of lack of communication, potential risk of having fewer or non-working radios at all the emergency services in Oregon.

My name is Art Hatch, resident of Deschutes County. I also represent the Deschutes County Fire Defense Board and I would just echo the concerns and comments of my colleagues with regard to OWIN. The interoperability of communications is essential to first responders statewide regardless of discipline.

