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**Technology, Energy &  
Communications Committee**

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**HB 2787**

**Brief Description:** Concerning statewide radio communications interoperability.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Hurst, Ericks, O'Brien, Morris, McCoy, Morrell, Anderson, Loomis, Simpson and Goodman.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Creates the Washington Interoperability Office within the Office of the Governor.
- Transfers several of the responsibilities of the Statewide Interoperability Executive Committee to the Washington Interoperability Office.
- Creates a Public Safety Interoperability Account.
- Creates a Public Safety Interoperability Grant Program, subject to available funding.

**Hearing Date:** 1/22/08

**Staff:** Kara Durbin (786-7133).

**Background:**

Interoperability generally refers to the ability of emergency management and response personnel to interact and work well together, particularly in an emergency situation.

Agencies at all levels are responsible for operating their own communications systems. There are numerous different types of communications systems available and in use. These systems range from technology dating from the 1970s to cutting-edge digital voice and data systems. These disparate communications systems often do not interoperate easily, if at all.

Information Services Board: The Information Services Board (Board) was created in 1987. It is responsible for information technology planning, policies, and standards for state agencies. With

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respect to radio communications systems, the Board is responsible for the licensing of radio spectrum by or on behalf of state agencies.

State Interoperability Executive Committee: In 2003, the Legislature created the State Interoperability Executive Committee (SIEC) as a permanent sub-committee of the Information Services Board (Board). The SIEC consists of members from city, county, and state government, local law enforcement, fire, and emergency management jurisdictions in the state.

In 2004, the SIEC began to take inventory of and evaluate all state and local government owned public safety communications systems and to prepare a statewide public safety communications plan. In December of 2004, the SIEC submitted its final report to the Legislature. In its report, the SIEC found that the majority of public safety responders are not able to communicate effectively or directly with their federal, state, and local counterparts. The SIEC also found that there is a lack of financial resources to support a vision of interoperability in the state.

Technical Implementation Plan: In 2005, the SIEC completed its Technical Implementation Plan (TIP). The TIP provides a high-level approach for planning to transition from the current agency-based public safety radio systems to a standards based, frequency independent, multiple subsystems technology architecture.

A key component of the TIP is moving the state towards a statewide, Project-25 (P-25) technology. The P-25 standard is a communications interoperability standard supported and used by the federal government, numerous state governments, and by the communications industry. Many federal funding opportunities for advanced communications systems indicate a preference for P-25 compliant equipment.

In 2006, the Legislature charged the SIEC with coordinating the purchase of all state wireless radio communications systems equipment to ensure that, at a minimum: (1) any new trunked standard, after the transition from a radio over internet protocol network, is P-25; (2) any new system that requires advanced digital features is P-25; and (3) any new system or equipment purchases can be upgraded to the P-25 standard.

In 2006, the Washington State Patrol (WSP) was designated as the lead agency for implementation of the TIP.

Federal Funding: In July of 2007, the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced the allocations and guidelines for its Public Safety Interoperability Communications (PSIC) Grant Program. The PSIC Grant Program provides funding to states as a one-time, formula-based, matching grant program to assist public safety agencies in the acquisition of, deployment of, or training for the use of interoperable communications systems that utilize, or enable interoperability with, communications systems that can utilize the 700 MHz frequency band.

Statewide Communications Interoperability Plan: One of the requirements of the PSIC Grant Program was that each state must develop, adopt, and submit a Statewide Communications Interoperability Plan (SCIP). The SIEC led the development of the SCIP, with coordination and input from the Washington State Patrol (WSP), EMD, local jurisdictions, tribes, and non-governmental organizations.

The SIEC submitted the final draft of the SCIP to the DHS on November 27, 2007. Investments justification were submitted to the DHS on November 30, 2007. The state anticipates to receive approval or denial of their investment justifications and the SCIP on or after March 31, 2008.

Emergency Services Communication Systems: Counties may form emergency service communications districts, which refer to multi-county, countywide, or district-wide radio or landline communications networks, including an enhanced 911 telephone system. These districts may be funded by imposing an excise tax of up to 50 cents per month on each switched access line or radio access line.

### **Summary of Bill:**

Creation of the Washington Interoperability Office: The Washington Interoperability Office (Office) is established in the Office of the Governor. The stated purpose of the Office is to establish an interoperable, statewide radio communications system. The Office is headed by the Washington Interoperability Coordinator, a newly established position in the Office.

The Office is charged with several duties, including:

- Establishing statewide policies for wireless radio communications systems;
- Establishing uniform technical requirements consistent, when possible, with federal guidelines and standards;
- Reviewing the Statewide Communications Interoperability Plan (SCIP) and adopting technical standards for wireless radio communications systems;
- Evaluating interoperability projects in the state and making recommendations on federal and state funding;
- Ensuring that state and federal funding is being spent in alignment with state technical standards for radio communications systems;
- Coordinating interoperability communications investments in the state;
- Coordinating and managing the licensing and use of state-designated and state-licensed radio frequency and serving as the point of contact with the Federal Communications Commission on matters related to radio spectrum for state agencies;
- Coordinating the purchasing of Project-25 (P-25) compatible equipment for the state;
- Certifying when a state or local governing achieves "Level-5" interoperability and meets the technical requirements of the Technical Implementation Plan (TIP);
- Seeking funding support for wireless radio communications systems; and
- Making grant funding available to eligible local governments.

The Office must report annually to the Governor and the Legislature on progress towards implementing the SCIP.

Information Services Board: The Information Services Board (Board) is no longer responsible for the licensing of radio spectrum by or on behalf of state agencies. This responsibility is transferred to the Office.

State Interoperability Executive Committee: The role of the State Interoperability Executive Committee (SIEC) is changed. The SIEC is reconstituted as an advisory committee to the Office. The Washington Interoperability Coordinator must appoint the chair of the SIEC from among the voting members of the SIEC.

Several responsibilities of the SIEC under current law related to interoperability are transferred to the Office. In addition, the SIEC must advise the Office in the prioritization of grant applications submitted by local governments.

Public Safety Interoperability Account: A Public Safety Interoperability Account (Account) is created. Moneys may be spent on investments establishing, operating, or maintaining radio communications systems that achieve high-level interoperability, or for relevant training. Only the Washington Interoperability Coordinator, or the Coordinator's designee, may authorize expenditures from the Account.

Public Safety Interoperability Grant Program: Subject to the availability of funds, a Public Safety Interoperability Grant Program is established. The stated purpose of the grant program is to assist local governments in making investments in shared, interoperable radio communications systems.

The Office may only approve a grant application if:

- The applicant is a local government or a consortium of local governments;
- The applicant has entered into an interagency agreement with participating local governments and state agencies regarding cost sharing, governance, and management of the proposed radio communications system;
- The applicant will manage and maintain the operations of the radio communications system, but will allow the state to use and access the system when necessary; and
- The proposed radio communications system is P-25 compliant or can be upgraded to P-25 and is consistent with federal guidelines and standards for interoperability.

The Office may give preference to applications that meet any of the following criteria:

- The proposed radio communications system will contribute towards a statewide, Level-5 interoperability system;
- The estimated population of the applicant is more than 100,000; and
- The applicant has secured funding from other sources for the project.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Preliminary fiscal note available.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.