

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 1952

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**As Reported by House Committee On:**  
Technology, Energy & Communications

**Title:** An act relating to a pilot program on interoperable communication systems.

**Brief Description:** Establishing a local government interoperability pilot program.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Morris, O'Brien, Lovick, Ericks, Anderson and Kilmer.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Technology, Energy & Communications: 2/24/05 [DP].

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Brief Summary of Bill</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Creates a local government interoperability communications system pilot program that is intended to demonstrate to local governments the value of implementing the pending interoperability standards.</li></ul>
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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY, ENERGY & COMMUNICATIONS

**Majority Report:** Do pass. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Morris, Chair; Kilmer, Vice Chair; Crouse, Ranking Minority Member; Haler, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Ericks, Hudgins, P. Sullivan, Sump, Takko and Wallace.

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

**Background:**

In 2003, the Washington State Information Services Board established the State Interoperability Executive Committee (Committee) 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. The plan was to set forth recommendations for executive and legislative action to ensure that public safety communications systems can communicate with one another and conform to federal law and regulations governing emergency communication systems and spectrum allocation. The plan was to include specific goals for improving interoperability of public safety communications systems and identifiable benchmarks for achieving those goals.

In December of 2004, the Committee submitted its final report to the Legislature. In its report, the Committee found that the majority of public safety responders are not able to communicate effectively or directly with their federal, state, regional, local, or tribal

counterparts. The Committee also found there is a lack of financial resources to support the vision of interoperability within the state.

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**Summary of Bill:**

A local government interoperability communication system pilot program is established. The Legislature intends to limit the pilot program to a county public safety agency that develops a funding partnership among federal, state, and local governments.

On or before July 1, 2006, the Committee shall award a \$5 million grant to a single public safety agency. The grant is designed to assist a county public safety agency in developing a communications system that is capable of interoperating with state agencies, as well as other local governments.

In order to be eligible for the grant, a county public safety agency must do all of the following:

- (1) secure \$5 million from the federal government for the purpose of partnering with the State of Washington to implement an interoperable communication system;
- (2) enact a countywide measure to fund public safety communication equipment and to raise a minimum of \$5 million;
- (3) agree that all communication equipment purchased by the public safety agency shall be digital equipment that complies with Project 25 standards established by the Association of Public Safety Communications Officials, National Association of State Telecommunication Directors, and federal government agencies; and
- (4) comply with all current and future interoperability communication standards adopted by the state interoperability executive committee.

This pilot program is null and void if specified funding or grants are not secured by July 1, 2006.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on February 21, 2005.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed. However, the bill is null and void unless funded in the budget.

**Testimony For:** This issue has been in progress for the past two years. In a disaster, basic radio communication between departments and across county lines is critical. Right now, we do not have the interoperability in place that we need to respond effectively in the event of a major emergency situation. The technology exists, but local governments do not have the resources right now to implement the new technology. Often local governments have more than one band frequency in use. We need all emergency responders to be able to communicate with one another. Emergency personnel at all levels are at a point where they

need to replace their radio systems. The cost to repair existing technology is high. This bill works toward a solution of greater interoperability in the state. The federal government is also supporting interoperability with Project 25 technology. Project 25 technology allows various radios, which may be operated by different vendors, to communicate with one another. Spokane County intends to use Project 25 technology to partner with federal, state, and local entities. Spokane County passed a tax initiative last year to raise \$5 million, and we're asking for \$5 million from the federal government as well as the homeland security funds to try to secure an additional \$10 million. We also would like to see pilot programs in other areas, especially smaller counties. A single jurisdiction on its own is not creating interoperability; there needs to be collaboration between jurisdictions. The state interoperability standards have not been fully finalized, and might not be entirely appropriate for the local level.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Persons Testifying:** Representative Morris, prime sponsor; Larry Lindskog, Spokane County Sheriff Office; and Sophia Byrd, Washington Association of Counties.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.