

House Government and Veterans Affairs Committee
House Bill 1146
By Dustin L. Theurer
January 22, 2021

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, my name is Dustin Theurer, Interim Fire Chief of the Bismarck Rural Fire Department.

I am requesting your support of House Bill 1146, in particular that political subdivisions be able to receive the rebate for radios needed as the new radio system is being provided across the state for emergency agencies. This new language allows fire protection districts to now be included.

Communication is an essential function of fire protection districts and keeps everyone safe on the fire ground.

There is one area of concern in relation to House Bill 1146 that I would like to address, which is the dollar amount of the rebate. Small fire departments desiring to migrate onto the SIRN system will have to purchase radios as the new radio system is being implemented state wide. Without the rebate, the affected departments will have to purchase these radios out of their normal budget, which could have a drastic impact on the budget. Having to spend money on radios could delay them being able to purchase a needed piece of apparatus or proper gear to keep them safe when they are called to emergency situations.

As mentioned above, having good reliable radios for communication keeps both emergency personnel and the public safe. Based on data received, the approximate value the radios that these departments will purchase will start at approximately \$1,800 for a handheld radio and \$2,200 for a vehicle radio. This price reflects the cost of a very basic radio and may not include other essential items. For example a noise canceling lapel microphone can cost up to \$400.00 each. As this is something that they will need to have the fire departments serving North Dakota would appreciate consideration for increasing the reimbursement amount to help all agencies with these additional costs.

Thank you for your consideration in allowing rural fire protection districts to be included in the radio rebate and also considering the radio rebate amount to be increased to \$2,500.00 per radio with House Bill 1146. I am available for any questions that you may have.