

2025 SENATE STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

SB 2296

2025 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

State and Local Government Committee Peace Garden Room, State Capitol

SB 2296
1/30/2025

Relating to first responders.

10:55 a.m. Chair Roers called the hearing to order.

Members Present: Chairman Roers; Vice Chair Castaneda; Senators: Barta, Braunberger, Lee and Walen.

Discussion Topics:

- Expertise in crisis
- Public Safety

10:55 a.m. Senator Walen, District 4, testified in favor and submitted testimony #32957.

11:02 a.m. Sarah Miller, Barnes County Dispatch Public Safety Telecommunications Director/911 Coordinator, testified in favor and submitted testimony #32402.

11:20 a.m. Shannon LaHaise, Director Grand Forks Dispatch Center, testified in favor and submitted testimony #32622.

Additional written testimony:

Jill Breuer, Richland County Communications/911, submitted testimony #31904 in favor.

Kimberly Robbins, LaMoure County EM/911, Coordinator Ambulance Driver, submitted testimony #32134 in favor.

11:25 a.m. Chair Roers closed the hearing.

Susan Helbling, Committee Clerk

Dear Chairperson Roars and Members of the Committee,

I appreciate the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of Senate Bill 2296. I am Jill Breuer, the Communications/911 Manager for Richland County. I would like to express my strong endorsement of Public Safety Telecommunicators as an important initiative to recognize the vital role of "first responders" in our communities. It is crucial to acknowledge and support all individuals trained to provide immediate help during emergencies, including the public safety telecommunicators who act as the essential link between those in distress and the resources that save lives.

Traditionally, the term "first responder" encompasses paramedics, firefighters, and law enforcement officers who provide urgent aid during crises. However, it is imperative to include public safety telecommunicators in this definition. These dedicated professionals coordinate emergency responses, deliver critical instructions, and ensure the swift dispatch of resources while operating under immense stress.

The impact of their role cannot be overstated. They are the first points of contact in emergencies, providing guidance, reassurance, and essential instructions to callers in crisis. Their expertise often makes the difference between life and death, directly influencing the success of interventions done by on-scene responders.

Recognizing public safety telecommunicators as first responders not only honors their commitment but also enhances the support, training, and resources they rightfully deserve. This designation reinforces the importance of their work and strengthens our entire emergency response framework.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and dedication to addressing this critical issue. Should you have any questions or need additional information, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Sincerely,



Jill Breuer

Richland County Communications/911 Manager

In Support of Senate Bill 2296

Before the Senate State and Local Government Committee,

Senator Kristin Roers, Chair

January 30, 2025

Chairman, Senator Roers, and members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of Senate Bill 2296. My name is Kimberly Robbins, and I am the LaMoure County Emergency Manager and 9-1-1 Coordinator. I also currently serve on the Public Relations Committee and was a past president of the North Dakota 9-1-1 Association. I also have maintained my North Dakota Emergency Medical Responder and volunteer as a driver for the Community Volunteer EMS of LaMoure. Thus, I feel thankful to work with the dedicated individuals that serve as public safety telecommunicators. Public Safety Telecommunicators help people each day in our county and State and thus I want to show support for their recognition as first responders.

As Public Relations Committee chair of the North Dakota 9-1-1 Association, it is one of my responsibilities to help support all those that enhance, improve, promote and facilitate the North Dakota Emergency 9-1-1 System – and the first ones that should be supported are the first ones that answer the call. The dispatchers do so much more than answer the call. They gather information, collect data, communicate with others and really lead the entire team of first responders to make the 9-1-1 system work.

LaMoure County is served by North Dakota State Radio to answer our 9-1-1 calls, dispatch our first responders, guide our responders and assist them along. As a driver on the local ambulance, the dispatcher is part of your team of first responders. I have been in the role of the driver of the ambulance requesting help from the dispatcher – from requesting patient updates to requesting additional resources to helping coordinate a multi-agency response. The dispatcher is really the first one on scene as they are gathering information from the caller and communicating with the rest of the first responder team. The public safety telecommunicator is there helping and guiding along the way. Thus, I would ask that the committee help support a valuable member of the Public Safety Team - - the public safety telecommunicator. Please support Senate Bill 2296 that would recognize the public safety telecommunicator as a First Responder.

Kimberly Robbins

krobbins@nd.gov

LaMoure, ND

January 28, 2025

Dear Chairperson Roers and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today in support of Senate Bill 2296. My name is Sarah Miller, Public Safety Telecommunications Director and 911 Coordinator for Barnes County Dispatch and President of the North Dakota 911 Association. I have been serving this industry for 15 years in various roles such as Public Safety Telecommunicator, Public Safety Telecommunications Supervisor, Reserve Deputy, and Emergency Medical Technician. The testimony I am providing you with today is testimony on behalf of myself only and not the official positions of any organization I am affiliated with.

It is with great excitement I am here today in support of Senate Bill 2296 - defining the men and women who answer 911 calls, dispatch emergency responders, and coordinate life-saving efforts – as First Responders. Public Safety Telecommunicators are the first link in the vital chain of emergency services provided to the public. They are the “first” first responders and first point of contact in an emergency. Their expertise, quick thinking, and ability to make split-second decisions under pressure literally means the difference between someone living and someone dying.

This work requires Telecommunicators to work under intense pressure, often handling multiple emergencies simultaneously. Whether its dispatching law enforcement, fire, EMS, or other entities, their actions are immediate and directly contribute to the outcome of the emergency. They make life saving decisions, provide critical instructions to callers (such as CPR Guidance), and provide coordination in complex situations, keeping responding agencies updated with real-time information. This support ensures that responders arrive on-scene prepared, with necessary resources, and most importantly, safely.

Public Safety Telecommunicators also experience the same emotional and mental strain as first responders in the field. They are exposed to distressing and traumatic calls, yet must remain calm, focused, and professional in order to provide critical assistance to their caller. Their work can be just as hazardous to their mental health and recognizing Public Safety Telecommunicators as first responders will ensure access to the same support, training, and resources that are needed to continue a high level of service to their communities. It also publicly recognizes their true value and essential role in ensuring a safe community and state.

While in support of the deserved recognition I also am requesting an amendment to Section 2. As currently proposed, Section 2's addition of “and First Responders” would allow the department of health and human services to regulate communications methods and protocols for ALL first responders. This regulation is already addressed in existing sections of Century Code, providing extensive and comprehensive guidelines ensuring effective communications between responder groups. This amendment is a broad statement that could have unintentional regulatory consequences.

By defining the role of a First Responder, and recognizing Public Safety Telecommunicators in that role, we are acknowledging the true reality of their work. We recognize the responsibility, the expertise, and the immense pressure they shoulder each day as they leave their families, sign into their consoles, and take that first call each shift. These dedicated individuals are indispensable to public safety, and they deserve to be recognized as equal partners in being a First Responder. By eliminating repetitive provisions, such as the amendment in Section 2, we ensure our emergency response system remains well organized and concentrated on saving lives.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and recognition of this important issue. I am happy to answer any questions you have.

Sincerely,



Sarah Miller
Public Safety Telecommunications Director/911 Coordinator
Barnes County Dispatch
701-845-8187

Sixty-ninth
Legislative Assembly
of North Dakota

SENATE BILL NO. 2296

Introduced by

Senators Walen, Luick, Enget

Representatives Fegley, Vigesaa

1 A BILL for an Act to amend and reenact sections 23-27-02 and 23-27-04.8 of the North Dakota
2 Century Code, relating to first responders.

3 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF NORTH DAKOTA:

4 **SECTION 1. AMENDMENT.** Section 23-27-02 of the North Dakota Century Code is
5 amended and reenacted as follows:

6 23-27-02. Definitions.

7 For the purpose of this chapter, unless the context otherwise requires:

- 8 1. "Department" means the department of health and human services.
- 9 2. "Emergency medical services" means the prehospital medical stabilization or
10 transportation, including interfacility transportation, of an individual who is sick, injured,
11 wounded, or otherwise incapacitated or helpless, or in a real or perceived acute
12 medical condition, by a person that holds oneself out to the public as being in that
13 service or that regularly provides that service. The term includes:
 - 14 a. Assessing, stabilizing, and treating life-threatening and non-life-threatening
15 medical conditions; or
 - 16 b. Transporting a patient who is in a real or perceived acute medical condition to a
17 hospital emergency room or other appropriate medical destination.
- 18 3. "Emergency medical services operation" means an entity licensed to offer and provide
19 emergency medical services by emergency medical services personnel with physician
20 oversight. The term includes basic life support ambulance services, advanced life
21 support ambulance services, air ambulance services, and quick response unit
22 services.
- 23 4. "Emergency medical services personnel" means individuals who provide emergency
24 medical services for emergency medical services operations. The term includes

1 emergency medical services professionals, drivers, and department-certified
2 emergency medical services providers, such as cardiopulmonary resuscitation drivers
3 and first responders.

4 5. "Emergency medical services professional" means an individual licensed by the
5 department under this chapter.

6 6. "First responder" means an individual trained to provide assistance during an
7 emergency, including a firefighter as defined under section 18-11-03, law enforcement
8 officer as defined under section 12.1-01-04, public safety telecommunicator as defined
9 under section 57-40.6-01, and emergency medical services personnel.

10 **SECTION 2. AMENDMENT.** Section 23-27-04.8 of the North Dakota Century Code is
11 amended and reenacted as follows:

12 **23-27-04.8. Emergency medical services operation communications.**

13 The department may regulate the communications methods and protocols for emergency
14 medical services operations and first responders in a manner consistent with the protocols
15 established by the department of emergency services.

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Grand Forks, ND 58206-5200



City of Grand Forks
(701) 746-4636

TESTIMONY ON SENATE BILL 2296
Senate State & Local Government
January 30, 2025

Shannon LaHaise, Director of Public Safety Answering Point
City of Grand Forks, ND

Chair Roers and members of the committee. I appreciate the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of Senate Bill 2296. My name is Shannon LaHaise, and I am the Director of the Grand Forks Public Safety Answering Point/911 Center; serving in this field for over 28 years. I would like to express my strong endorsement and appreciation for the framework of this bill that recognizes Public Safety Telecommunicators as first responders. I also wish to address the relevance of the provisions granting the Department of Health oversight of communications between emergency personnel and first responders.

Public Safety Telecommunicators play a critical and indispensable role in emergency response systems. They are the 'first' first responder during emergencies. Their responsibilities go beyond simply answering calls—they assess situations, prioritize responses, and provide life saving measures to citizens, while relaying vital information to first responders in the field, often under immense pressure.

This work requires the same level of dedication, training, and professionalism as that of firefighters, paramedics, and law enforcement officers. Recognizing Public Safety Telecommunicators as first responders underscores their value and ensures they receive the support, training, and resources that align with the demands of their role.

While advocating for this recognition, I must also request the reconsideration of the framework of the language in the Second Amendment of SB 2296. The Second Amendment's provision that grants the Department of Health oversight of communications between emergency personnel and **all** first responders is a very broad statement that could have unintended regulatory consequences. This oversight is already addressed in other sections of the Century Code, which provide comprehensive regulations ensuring effective communication and coordination among emergency response entities.

By recognizing Public Safety Telecommunicators as first responders, it aligns with the reality of their work and the critical role they play in public safety. Simultaneously, by eliminating redundant provisions, such as the Department of Health's oversight of emergency communications, we ensure that our emergency response systems remain efficient and focused on their core mission—saving lives.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and dedication to addressing these critical issues. Should you have any questions or need additional information, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Sincerely,
Shannon LaHaise
Grand Forks PSAP, Director



North Dakota Senate

STATE CAPITOL
600 EAST BOULEVARD
BISMARCK, ND 58505-0360



Senator Chuck Walen

District 4
422 Eagle Drive
New Town, ND 58763-4041
cwalen@ndlegis.gov

COMMITTEES:

Finance and Taxation
State and Local Government

1/30/2025

Senate State and Local Government

SB 2296 Define 911 operators as 1st responders.

Chairman Roers and Committee members:

SB 2296 is to define who a first responder is in Century Code and to include "911 operators" or Public Safety Telecommunicators as first responders.

First responders provide urgent aid during emergencies, and the 1st of the 1st responders are those who answer the calls. They are highly trained to remain calm while providing whatever help is necessary, coordinating emergency responses, and give guidance and direction to those who have called and those sent to help.

They experience emotional and mental strain very similar to those in the field and should enjoy the same recognition as a vital cog in the process.

Please vote do pass on SB 2296

I stand for any questions

2025 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

State and Local Government Committee Room JW216, State Capitol

SB 2296
2/13/2025

Relating to emergency services communications systems.
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8:43 a.m. Chair Roers called the hearing to order.

Members Present: Chairman Roers; Vice Chair Castaneda; Senators: Barta, Braunberger, Lee and Walen.

Discussion Topics:

- Committee Action

8:45 a.m. Senator Braunberger moved Amendment LC #25.1288.01001.

8:45 a.m. Senator Walen seconded the motion.

Senators	Vote
Senator Kristin Roers	Y
Senator Jose L. Castaneda	Y
Senator Jeff Barta	Y
Senator Ryan Braunberger	Y
Senator Judy Lee	Y
Senator Chuck Walen	Y

Motion Passed 6-0-0

8:48 a.m. Senator Braunberger moved a Do Pass as Amended.

8:48 a.m. Senator Walen seconded the motion.

Senators	Vote
Senator Kristin Roers	Y
Senator Jose L. Castaneda	Y
Senator Jeff Barta	Y
Senator Ryan Braunberger	Y
Senator Judy Lee	Y
Senator Chuck Walen	Y

Motion Passed 6-0-0

Senato Braunberger will carry the bill.

8:50 a.m. Chair Roers closed the hearing.

Susan Helbling, Committee Clerk

Sixty-ninth
Legislative Assembly
of North Dakota

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO

SENATE BILL NO. 2296

Introduced by

Senators Walen, Luick, Enget

Representatives Fegley, Vigesaa

1 A BILL ~~for an Act to amend and reenact sections 23-27-02 and 23-27-04.8 of the North Dakota~~
2 ~~Century Code, relating to first responders.~~for an Act to amend and reenact section 57-40.6-01
3 of the North Dakota Century Code, relating to emergency services communications systems.

4 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF NORTH DAKOTA:**

5 ~~**SECTION 1. AMENDMENT.** Section 23-27-02 of the North Dakota Century Code is~~
6 ~~amended and reenacted as follows:~~
7 ~~**23-27-02. Definitions.**~~
8 ~~For the purpose of this chapter, unless the context otherwise requires:~~
9 ~~1. "Department" means the department of health and human services.~~
10 ~~2. "Emergency medical services" means the prehospital medical stabilization or~~
11 ~~transportation, including interfacility transportation, of an individual who is sick, injured,~~
12 ~~wounded, or otherwise incapacitated or helpless, or in a real or perceived acute~~
13 ~~medical condition, by a person that holds oneself out to the public as being in that~~
14 ~~service or that regularly provides that service. The term includes:~~
15 ~~a. Assessing, stabilizing, and treating life-threatening and non-life-threatening~~
16 ~~medical conditions; or~~
17 ~~b. Transporting a patient who is in a real or perceived acute medical condition to a~~
18 ~~hospital emergency room or other appropriate medical destination.~~
19 ~~3. "Emergency medical services operation" means an entity licensed to offer and provide~~
20 ~~emergency medical services by emergency medical services personnel with physician~~

oversight. The term includes basic life support ambulance services, advanced life support ambulance services, air ambulance services, and quick response unit services.

4. "Emergency medical services personnel" means individuals who provide emergency medical services for emergency medical services operations. The term includes emergency medical services professionals, drivers, and department-certified emergency medical services providers, such as cardiopulmonary resuscitation drivers and first responders.

5. "Emergency medical services professional" means an individual licensed by the department under this chapter.

6. "First responder" means an individual trained to provide assistance during an emergency, including a firefighter as defined under section 18-11-03, law enforcement officer as defined under section 12.1-01-04, public safety telecommunicator as defined under section 57-40.6-01, and emergency medical services personnel.

SECTION 2. AMENDMENT. Section 23-27-04.8 of the North Dakota Century Code is amended and reenacted as follows:

23-27-04.8. Emergency medical services operation communications.

The department may regulate the communications methods and protocols for emergency medical services operations and first responders in a manner consistent with the protocols established by the department of emergency services.

SECTION 1. AMENDMENT. Section 57-40.6-01 of the North Dakota Century Code is amended and reenacted as follows:

57-40.6-01. Definitions.

In this chapter, unless the context otherwise requires:

1. "911 system" means a set of networks, software applications, databases, call answering components, and operations and management procedures required to provide 911 services.
2. "911 system service provider" means an entity that provides the systems and support necessary to enable 911 calling for one or more public safety answering points in a specific geographic area. A 911 system service provider may provide the systems and support for either enhanced 911 or next generation 9-1-1.

- 1 3. "Assessed communications service" means a software service, communication
2 connection, cable or broadband transport facilities, or a combination of these facilities,
3 between a billed retail end user and a service provider's network that provides the end
4 user, upon contacting 911, access to a public safety answering point through a
5 permissible interconnection to the dedicated 911 network. The term includes
6 telephone exchange access service, wireless service, and voice over internet protocol
7 service.
- 8 4. "Automated notification system" means that portion of a telecommunications system
9 that provides rapid notice of emergency situations to the public.
- 10 5. "Commissioner" means the state tax commissioner.
- 11 6. "Communication connection" means a telephone access line, wireless access line,
12 unique voice over internet protocol service connection, or functional equivalent
13 uniquely identifiable by a number, internet address, or other designation.
- 14 7. "Consumer" means a person who purchases prepaid wireless service in a retail
15 transaction.
- 16 8. "Emergency services communication system" means a comprehensive statewide or
17 countywide system, which provides rapid public access for coordinated dispatching of
18 public safety services. The system includes a 911 system or radio system.
- 19 9. "FCC order" means federal communications commission order 94-102 [961 Federal
20 Register 40348] and any other FCC order that affects the provision of wireless
21 enhanced 911 service.
- 22 10. "First responder" means an individual trained to provide assistance during an
23 emergency, including a firefighter as defined under section 18-11-03, law enforcement
24 officer as defined under section 12.1-01-04, emergency medical services personnel as
25 defined under section 23-27-02, and public safety telecommunicators.
- 26 11. "Prepaid wireless emergency 911 fee" means the fee that is required to be collected
27 by a seller from a consumer in the amount established under section 57-40.6-14.
- 28 ~~11.~~ 12. "Prepaid wireless service" means any telecommunications service that provides the
29 right to use a mobile wireless service as well as other nontelecommunications
30 services, including the download of digital products delivered electronically, content

- 1 and ancillary services, which are paid for in advance and sold in predetermined units
2 or dollars which decline with use in a known amount.
- 3 ~~12-13.~~ "Prepaid wireless service provider" means any person that provides prepaid wireless
4 telecommunications service pursuant to a license issued by the federal
5 communications commission.
- 6 ~~13-14.~~ "Public safety answering point" or "PSAP" means a communications facility or
7 combination of facilities which first receives 911 calls from persons in a 911 service
8 area and which, as appropriate, may directly dispatch public safety services or extend,
9 transfer, or relay 911 calls to appropriate public safety agencies.
- 10 ~~14-15.~~ "Public safety answering point service area" means the geographic area for which a
11 public safety answering point has dispatch and emergency communications
12 responsibility.
- 13 ~~15-16.~~ "Public safety services" means personnel, equipment, and facilities used by ~~law~~
14 ~~enforcement, fire, medical,~~ first responders or other supporting services used in
15 providing a public safety response to an incident.
- 16 ~~16-17.~~ "Public safety telecommunicator" means an individual whose primary full-time or
17 part-time duties are receiving, processing, and transmitting public safety information
18 received through an emergency services communication system.
- 19 ~~17-18.~~ "Radio system" means a set of networks, software applications, databases, radio
20 components and infrastructure, and operations and management procedures required
21 to provide communication services.
- 22 ~~18-19.~~ "Retail transaction" means the purchase of prepaid wireless service from a seller for
23 any purpose other than resale.
- 24 ~~19-20.~~ "Seller" means a person who sells prepaid wireless services to a consumer.
- 25 ~~20-21.~~ "Subscriber service address" means, for purposes of telephone exchange access
26 service and voice over internet protocol service subscribers, the address where the
27 subscriber's communication device is used and, for purposes of wireless subscribers,
28 the place of primary use, as that term is defined in section 57-34.1-02.
- 29 ~~21-22.~~ "Telephone access line" means the principal access to the telephone company's
30 switched network, including an outward dialed trunk or access register.

- 1 22-23. "Telephone exchange access service" means service to any wire line telephone
2 access line identified by a unique telephone number that provides local wire line
3 access to the telecommunications network to a service subscriber and which enables
4 the subscriber to access the emergency services communications system by dialing
5 the digits 9-1-1 on the subscriber's telephone device.
- 6 23-24. "Unpublished" means information that is not published or available from directory
7 assistance.
- 8 24-25. "Voice over internet protocol service" means a service that enables real-time two-way
9 voice communications; requires a broadband connection from the user's location;
10 requires internet protocol-compatible customer premises equipment; and permits
11 users generally to receive calls that originate on the public switched telephone network
12 and to terminate calls to the public switched telephone network.
- 13 25-26. "Wireless access line" means each active wireless and prepaid wireless telephone
14 number assigned to a commercial mobile radio service subscriber, including end users
15 of resellers.
- 16 26-27. "Wireless enhanced 911 service" means the service required to be provided by
17 wireless service providers pursuant to the FCC order.
- 18 27-28. "Wireless service" means commercial mobile radio service as defined in 47 U.S.C.
19 332(d)(1) and includes:
20 a. Services commonly referred to as wireless; and
21 b. Services provided by any wireless real-time two-way voice communication
22 device, including radio-telephone communications used in:
23 (1) Cellular telephone service;
24 (2) Personal communications service; or
25 (3) The functional or competitive equivalent of a radio-telephone
26 communications line used in cellular telephone service, personal
27 communications service, or a network radio access line.
- 28 28-29. "Wireless service provider" means any entity authorized by the federal
29 communications commission to provide wireless service within this state.

**REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE
SB 2296**

State and Local Government Committee (Sen. Roers, Chairman) recommends **AMENDMENTS** ([25.1288.01001](#)) and when so amended, recommends **DO PASS** (6 YEAS, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSENT AND NOT VOTING). SB 2296 was placed on the Sixth order on the calendar. This bill does not affect workforce development.

2025 HOUSE POLITICAL SUBDIVISIONS

SB 2296

2025 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Political Subdivisions Committee Room JW327B, State Capitol

SB 2296
3/14/2025

A BILL for an Act to amend and reenact section 57-40.6-01 of the North Dakota Century Code, relating to emergency services communications systems.

10:48 a.m. Chairman Longmuir opened the hearing.

Members Present: Chairman Longmuir, Vice-Chairman Fegley, Vice-Chairman Jonas, Representatives Bolinske, Hager, Hatlestad, Heilman, Klemin, Motschenbacher, Ostlie, Toman, Warrey

Members Absent: Representative Davis

Discussion Topics:

- Mental Health of emergency service communication employees
- Stress and trauma imposed upon first responders
- Emergency service communication employee retirement plans

10:49 a.m. Senator Chuck Walen, North Dakota Senator for District 4, introduced the bill and provided testimony #41489.

10:52 a.m. Darren Anderson, Deputy Director and Operations and Training Manager at North Dakota State Radio, testified in favor and provided testimony #41334.

10:56 a.m. Sarah Miller, President and Public Safety Telecommunications Director and 911 Coordinator at the North Dakota 911 Association Barnes Dispatch Center, testified in favor and provided testimony #41441.

Additional written testimony:

Cole Brunner, President of North Dakota Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials, submitted testimony in favor #41472.

11:04 a.m. Chairman Longmuir closed the hearing.

Wyatt Armstrong, Committee Clerk

March 13, 2025

Dear Chairman Longmuir and Members of the Political Subdivision Committee,

My name is Miranda Jangula, I am the Deputy Director/Operations & Training Manager of State Radio. I am here before you today to speak in favor of SB 2296, classifying Public Safety Telecommunicators as First Responders. I have been a part of the 911 emergency dispatch community for almost 23 years, 21 of those years serving as a Public Safety Telecommunicator.

I believe Public Safety Telecommunicators (PSTs) are deserving of this change because they are the first response to a call for help. There are many people in North Dakota who are alive today due to the quick thinking of a PST, before anyone arrived on scene. Some of these actions include giving Heimlich Maneuver instructions, CPR, first aid to stop heavy bleeding or instructing a new parent in what to do during and after the out of hospital birth of a child.

These dedicated individuals need to be ready at the drop of a hat. Unlike responders in the field, they do not get time to think about the situation while enroute. PSTs answer the calls or radio traffic and need to immediately react to whatever the situation may be. They have literal seconds to save a life. Their decisions affect the safety of those responding to the scene and they are the lifeline of the officers who are alone in a bad situation.

Not only do these individuals have to react with no prompt of what they are going to deal with, they also do not get time to recover after a high stress situation. I once talked someone through the death of a loved one as help was still enroute. Then immediately after, answered a reckless driver call. There is no time to decompress. You push it down and move on to do the job. This is one of the reasons PTSD is prevalent in PSTs. This scenario is something I had to do hundreds of times during my career and is the same for anyone who has been on the job for more than a year or two. These are things that still affect me to this day.

The importance of these individuals who give up holidays with their families, work long rotating shifts and live through countless crisis with the citizens needing their help deserve to be recognized for the sacrifices they make and the amazing work that they do. Without them, there is no response to a scene. They gather crucial information both said and unsaid by being highly skilled and trained in what they do.

Not only does the recognition go a long way for these individuals, but by recognizing them in the state of North Dakota, we join a growing list of other states that have already done so. These state classifications matter and help to get PSTs recognized as First Responders on the federal level. I ask you to please vote yes on SB 2296 and give these men and women the classification they deserve for all the hard and stressful work they do.

Thank you!



Miranda Jangula
Deputy Director/Operations & Training Manager
ND State Radio
mcjangula@nd.gov

March 13, 2025

Dear Chair Longmuir and members of the Political Subdivisions Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today in support of Senate Bill 2296. My name is Sarah Miller, Public Safety Telecommunications Director and 911 Coordinator for Barnes County Dispatch and President of the North Dakota 911 Association. I have been serving my community and this industry for over 15 years in various roles such as Public Safety Telecommunicator, Public Safety Telecommunications Supervisor, Reserve Deputy, and Emergency Medical Technician.

It is with great excitement I am here today in support of Senate Bill 2296 - defining the men and women who answer 911 calls, dispatch emergency responders, and coordinate life-saving efforts – as First Responders. Public Safety Telecommunicators are the first link in the vital chain of emergency services provided to the public. They are the “first” first responders and first point of contact in an emergency. Their expertise, quick thinking, and ability to make split-second decisions under pressure literally means the difference between someone living and someone dying.

This work requires Telecommunicators to work under intense pressure, often handling multiple emergencies simultaneously. Public Safety Telecommunicators are required to meet the same level of dedication, training, and professionalism as firefighters, emergency medical services personnel, and law enforcement officers. PST's have the same level of security clearances as our law enforcement partners and their training programs are rigorous, often lasting four to six months in order to become proficient at a multitude of difficult skills and multitasking. Whether its dispatching law enforcement, fire, EMS, or other entities, their actions are immediate and directly contribute to the outcome of the emergency. They make life saving decisions, provide critical instructions to callers (such as CPR Guidance and childbirth guidance – often when the caller is in a moving vehicle), and provide coordination in complex situations, keeping responding agencies updated with real-time information. This support ensures that responders arrive on-scene prepared, with necessary resources, and most importantly, safely.

Public Safety Telecommunicators also experience the same, if not greater, emotional and mental strain as first responders in the field. They are exposed to distressing and traumatic calls, yet must remain calm, focused, and professional in order to gather all necessary information and provide critical assistance to their caller. Upon disconnecting with the caller, PSTs rarely receive any closure or notification of outcome after a call has been completed leaving the stress of the call lingering with the PST since they do not know if the person lived or died, if the care, medical intervention, or support they gave to the caller made a difference. With available new technologies, Public Safety Telecommunicators are now exposed to live video feeds during calls as well. In our center alone, dispatchers have witnessed domestic altercations, suicide attempts, received photos of abuse and assault, and more. Their work can be just as hazardous to their mental and physical health and recognizing Public Safety Telecommunicators as first responders will help ensure access to the same support, training, and resources as those of their partner responders, which is desperately needed to continue a high level of service to their communities. It also publicly recognizes their true value and essential role in ensuring a safe community and state. The chain of Public safety simply does not exist without the Public Safety Telecommunicator.

By defining the role of a First Responder, and recognizing Public Safety Telecommunicators in that role, we are acknowledging the true reality of the work these men and women do 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. We recognize the responsibility, the expertise, and the immense pressure they shoulder each day as they leave their families, sign into their consoles, and take that first call each shift. These dedicated individuals are indispensable to public safety, and they deserve to be recognized as equal partners in being a First Responder.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and recognition of this important issue. I will stand for any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Sarah Miller
Public Safety Telecommunications Director/911 Coordinator
Barnes County Dispatch
North Dakota 911 Association, President
701-845-8187

March 14, 2025

Dear Chairperson Roers and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony today in support of Senate Bill 2296. My name is Cole M. Brunner, Shift Supervisor for Red River Regional Dispatch Center in Fargo and President of the North Dakota Chapter of Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials (APCO). I started my career in the emergency communications industry in 2014 as a Public Safety Telecommunicator and working my way up to a Shift Supervisor. My testimony today is on my behalf only and not that of my positions with my affiliated organizations.

Public Safety Telecommunicators (PSTs) play a vital role in emergency response for our communities. These individuals are the “first” first responders during emergencies by being the essential link between those needing emergency services and those critical life-saving resources. The responsibility of a PST goes beyond that of simply answering the phone and clerical type duties. These individuals are the first point of contact to collect important information to assess situations, provide life-saving pre-arrival medical instructions, and make split-second life or death decisions while building trust and rapport with citizens and responders.

The work of a PST requires extensive hours of training, continuing education, and dedication that are equal to those that work the field such as law enforcement officers, firefighters, and paramedics. By recognizing PSTs as first responders, it will honor their commitment and dedication while strengthening the importance of their work for generations to come.

As a PST, I have experienced many rewarding opportunities but have also experienced countless occasions of emotional and mental distress. Some believe that because we don’t respond to the scene of a call, we have no reason to experience stress or psychological trauma such as PTSD. In fact, it is the complete opposite. We are most often left without knowing the outcome of a call, resulting in our brains constantly replaying our own unsettling imagery of the situation. This, combined with working long rotating shifts, mandated overtime due to below staffing levels, missed family holidays and events, and sacrificed personal well-being build up and take a toll.

In this field, no one fights alone, regardless of what side of the radio you work on. We have shared experiences and shared challenges. Please help to break down that barrier that separates PSTs from being recognized as First Responders. This divide has existed for too long and I ask you to please vote in favor of SB 2296 so that we may be recognized for our service. This would ensure myself and my fellow PSTs across the State of North Dakota to have access to the same training, resources, support, and acknowledgement. I am proud to write to you today in support of SB 2296 and ask that you vote in support of it.

Thank you for your time and consideration in recognizing this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Cole M. Brunner", with a stylized, flowing script.

Cole M. Brunner



North Dakota Senate

STATE CAPITOL
600 EAST BOULEVARD
BISMARCK, ND 58505-0360



Senator Chuck Walen

District 4
422 Eagle Drive
New Town, ND 58763-4041
cwalen@ndlegis.gov

COMMITTEES:

Finance and Taxation
State and Local Government

3/14/2025

House Political Subdivision Committee

Chairman Longmuir and committee members

I am Chuck Walen Senator for District 4 and sponsor of SB 2296

SB 2296 is to define who a first responder is in Century Code "First responder" means an individual trained to provide assistance during an emergency, including a firefighter as defined under section 18 - 11 - 03, law enforcement officer as defined under section 12.1 - 01 - 04, emergency medical services personnel as defined under section 23 - 27 - 02, and public safety telecommunicators. Public Safety Telecommunicators or "911 operators" will now be listed as first responders under 57-40.6-01

First responders provide urgent aid during emergencies, and the 1st of the 1st responders are those who answer the calls. The 911/Public Safety Telecommunicators are highly trained to remain calm while providing whatever help is necessary, coordinating emergency responses, and give guidance and direction to those who have called and those sent to help. They jump from call to call and on some calls might be several minutes, while other calls could be an hour or more. Location matters how far away physical help

is from the emergency. They could be giving life saving information one minute and the next on a road side problem and then another to any other type of emergency.

They experience emotional and mental strain very similar to those in the field, but many times they do not have the time to decompress from one emergency to the next. They should enjoy the same recognition as a vital cog in the process.

Please vote do pass on SB 2296

I stand for any questions

2025 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Political Subdivisions Committee Room JW327B, State Capitol

SB 2296
3/14/2025

A BILL for an Act to amend and reenact section 57-40.6-01 of the North Dakota Century Code, relating to emergency services communications systems.

11:09 a.m. Chairman Longmuir opened the hearing.

Members Present: Chairman Longmuir, Vice-Chairman Fegley, Vice-Chairman Jonas, Representatives Bolinske, Hager, Hatlestad, Heilman, Klemin, Motschenbacher, Ostlie, Toman, Warrey

Members Absent: Representative Davis

Discussion Topics:

- Emergency communications system employee retirement plans
- North Dakota defined benefit plan

11:09 a.m. Vice-Chairman Fegley moved a Do Pass.

11:09 a.m. Representative Heilman seconded the motion.

11:16 a.m. Vice-Chairman Fegley withdrew his motion.

11:16 a.m. Chairman Longmuir closed the hearing.

Wyatt Armstrong, Committee Clerk

2025 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Political Subdivisions Committee Room JW327B, State Capitol

SB 2296
3/27/2025

A BILL for an Act to amend and reenact section 57-40.6-01 of the North Dakota Century Code, relating to emergency services communications systems.

10:03 a.m. Chairman Longmuir opened the hearing.

Members Present: Chairman Longmuir, Vice-Chairman Fegley, Representatives Bolinske, Hager, Hatlestad, Heilman, Klemin, Motschenbacher, Ostlie, Warrey

Members Absent: Vice-Chairman Jonas, Representatives Davis, Toman

Discussion Topics:

- Committee action

10:03 a.m. Representative Fegley moved a Do Pass.

10:04 a.m. Representative Heilman seconded the motion.

Representatives	Vote
Representative Donald W. Longmuir	Y
Representative Clayton Fegley	Y
Representative Jim Jonas	A
Representative Macy Bolinske	Y
Representative Jayme Davis	A
Representative LaurieBeth Hager	Y
Representative Patrick R. Hatlestad	Y
Representative Matthew Heilman	Y
Representative Lawrence R. Klemin	Y
Representative Mike Motschenbacher	Y
Representative Mitch Ostlie	Y
Representative Nathan Toman	A
Representative Jonathan Warrey	Y

10:05 a.m. Motion passed 10-0-3

10:06 a.m. Unanimous decision to be placed on the Consent Calendar.

10:06 a.m. Representative Fegley will carry the bill.

10:06 a.m. Chairman Longmuir closed the hearing.

Wyatt Armstrong, Committee Clerk

**REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE
ENGROSSED SB 2296 ([25.1288.02000](#))**

Political Subdivisions Committee (Rep. Longmuir, Chairman) recommends **DO PASS** and **BE PLACED ON THE CONSENT CALENDAR** (10 YEAS, 0 NAYS, 3 ABSENT OR EXCUSED AND NOT VOTING). SB 2296 was placed on the Tenth order on the calendar.