



UE Local 222, CILU/CIPU

Connecticut Independent Labor Union/
Connecticut Independent Police Union

March 4, 2010 *SB 312*

Re: Raised Bill No. ~~132~~ An Act Mandating the Regionalization of Public Safety
Emergency Telecommunication Centers

Good Day Ladies and Gentlemen,

My Name is Marie Lausch. I have been a 911 Dispatcher for the City of New Britain for 18 years, and am also President of the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America (UE) Local 222, representing over 2000 Municipal and Board of Education members, including hundreds of 911 Dispatchers across the State.

I have come to speak to you today in opposition of Raised Bill # 312 as it stands. I am not against regionalization of resources in general. I think if several towns are able to share a stump grinder, a swimming pool, a dog pound, etc, it might be a cost efficient idea. However, I think that forced wholesale regionalization of emergency services jeopardizes the public's safety.

While there are some regionalized services in operation already, such as the State Police Barracks services to small towns, and the Tolland County Fire Dispatch Center, I do not think this would be universally effective, and urge you to consider the downside of 911 regionalization.

I begin by asking this esteemed panel a simple question. What would be the total statewide cost of this plan? Do you have an exact figure? I am sure the overall total would be astronomical! You certainly could not just say "Pack up your portables and report to the new dispatch center tomorrow!" Assuredly there would be a requirement for new equipment with interconnectivity between towns and their existing police, fire, and EMS equipment, a larger facility to house such a center (probably new,) re-cabling, re-establishing microwave towers and other technologies, system redundancies, as well as the re-training of thousands of workers.

Folks, I drive a 2000 Ford Mustang, a zippy little car, kind of fun to drive. There is no doubt that I could get better gas mileage if I bought a brand new BMW. I'd save significantly at the pumps, and probably do better on oil, too! There is one little problem though: I cannot afford a new BMW (especially on a Dispatcher's pay.) The economic times are way too tough, and there is no way I could shoulder the cost. It is the same with our Connecticut taxpayers in these ruinous financial times, ladies and gentlemen. With our already overburdened State budget, we cannot afford to implement new regional centers and have them up and running by 2013.

The second issue I wish to raise is that of service and safety of the general public. In speaking to many dispatchers in various towns, especially urban towns with large low-income populations, we estimate that perhaps 25% - 30% of the 911 calls we get are from cellphones with no caller ID. Only the phone number, and the nearest cell tower shows on our enhanced 911 screens. Many times the college student, the elderly person unfamiliar with the area, a person with a language or speech impairment, or an injured party simply cannot tell us where they are. I have sent police cars out to one area of town on a hunch, with sirens blaring, trying to pinpoint the site of an emergency, and it is extremely nerve-wracking. Imagine enlarging the search area!

I also think that taking control away from the towns that are serviced, particularly large urban areas, eradicates local control, and also accountability. Would all 911 Dispatchers be terminated and re-hired into regional districts? Who has seniority, which operating system would be used? Are you going to bill towns by the amount of 911 calls made? What about the local calls such as those for directions, road conditions, questions of where people are incarcerated, etc? Should one town be billed more than another for these types of service?

Finally, I make the case of dollars / vs. / people; the human quotient. When a lost child calls crying and says he can see "a blue building," I know where he is. When the 2 year old is choking on a grape, as the parents from out of town call frantically, I know which intersection they are at by the landmarks they give. When an 86-year-old lady runs out of oil on a Saturday, and is too afraid to go to a shelter, I know just the guy to send to assist her, with a thermos of cocoa and a space heater. When the medics struggle during an ice storm to bring a man in cardiac arrest to the hospital, I know who to call for sand. I, like most 911 Dispatchers in the State, am committed to my job. I love my town, and the people in it. I am the FIRST first responder that you talk to on the phone. I treat MY police officers, MY firefighters, MY medics like family, because we are. Don't put peoples' lives in danger for the saving of a buck. Please do not Wal-Mart-ize the emergency services of Connecticut, our citizens deserve better.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Marie C. Lausch".

Marie C. Lausch
New Britain 911 Dispatcher
President, UE Local 222

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