

**Regional Emergency Communications Centers Association Testimony on March 6, 2012  
before the Public Safety and Security Committee in opposition to RB 5381**

Members of the Public Safety and Security Committee, my name is Jeffrey Otto. I am President of Quinebaug Valley Emergency Communications, one of Connecticut's seven Regional Communications Centers. These centers, members of RECCA, the Regional Emergency Communications Centers Association, are shown on the reverse side of this page. They provide 911 call receipt and dispatching services for 49.1% of Connecticut's 169 towns. Our Center, whose roots are in County Government, serves seventeen towns, thirty-four fire departments, fourteen ambulance organizations and three police departments in eastern Connecticut. Our rural towns benefit from the multi-frequency radio systems, advanced Computer Aided Dispatch programs, wide-area alpha paging and, most of all the dedicated professional dispatchers that we employ. No single town could afford to support such a system. Without the economies of scale that arise out of regionalization made possible by the subsidy of our operations from the E-911 fund, these rural towns would be reduced to receiving emergency alarms and summoning volunteer responders using phones in volunteer's homes and outdoor sirens in the same way that these chores were handled in the 1940's.

I have been involved with regional emergency communications in Connecticut for fifty-two years. There are few more active promoters of regionalized dispatching in the state. I am very proud of the practical economies and otherwise unachievable advanced capabilities provided to the towns served by RECCA members and am perplexed at the reluctance of towns that have not consolidated dispatch operations to work with their neighbors to lower the cost to their taxpayers. I was therefore encouraged that the Consolidation Feasibility Study would lead to clear plans to increase consolidation of dispatch operations in our state. Despite my enthusiastic support of further consolidation, I find that I must speak in opposition to RB 5381 for the following reasons:

The Feasibility Study is a large document containing many recommendations. Many of these are good, some do not fit with the political realities of our state and some recommendations are inconsistent with one another and with past practices in Connecticut. It would not be feasible to implement all of the recommendations, in part because both existing statutes and regulations will need to be revised. The Consultant's suggestions need to be rationalized against Connecticut's experience and situation. And some parts of the report, particularly the nonsensical suggestion that funding should be taken from currently consolidated centers so that PSAPs that have resisted consolidation would be encouraged to change their behavior, need to be ignored. Lastly, further incentives, including financial incentives, to consolidate need to be strongly considered. The most effective tool in Connecticut and in other states where the jurisdictions delivering these services are small has been financial incentives, not sanctions as is suggested in some cases by the Consultant.

We propose that the important effort to support increased consolidation be carried forward by altering the language of this Bill to eliminate complete compliance with the consultant's report and to require that the E-911 Commission and OSET convene a panel of affected parties [e.g., CT Fire Chief's Assn, CT Chiefs of Police Assn., COST, CIRMA, RECCA, a representative of an unconsolidated PSAP, and perhaps others] to develop recommendations for regulatory, statutory and fiscal changes. The timing and reporting requirements for this panel should be identical to the proposal of this Bill.

It goes almost without saying that the ability of this panel to suggest new policies is tied to the passage of RB 5378.

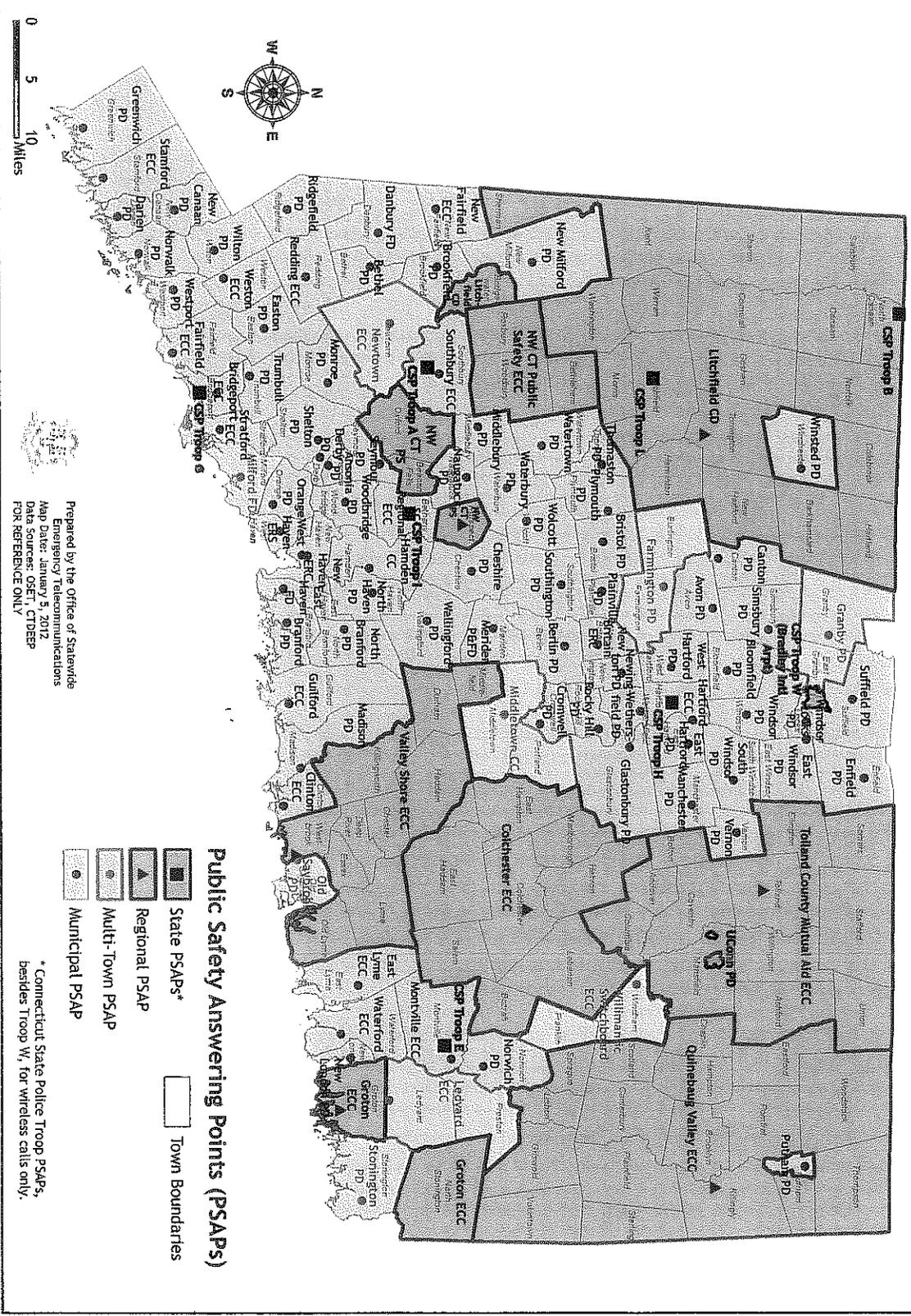
RECCA sincerely hopes that the panel suggested above and diligent work by its members, the E-911 Commission and OSET staff will result in policy changes that will incentivize many of the 40% of Connecticut's PSAPs who handle fewer than one 911 call per hour to join with their neighbors to provide better service at lower cost. At the same time it is crucial for Connecticut not to lose the substantial progress it has made in regionalizing half its towns by removing the affordable incentives that have resulted in this great progress.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this proposed legislation. I would be happy to answer questions in this matter this afternoon or at any time in the future.

Jeffrey B. Otto  
[jotto@snet.net](mailto:jotto@snet.net)  
860-377-4271

# Connecticut Public Safety Answering Points

As of July 1st, 2011



**RECCA MEMBERS**

[SHOWN IN RED ON MAP]

**Colchester Emergency Dispatch**  
 Covering Bozrah, Colchester, East Haddam, East Hampton, Hebron, Lebanon, Marlborough, Salem

**Groton Emergency Dispatch**  
 Covering Groton, North Stonington

**Litchfield County Dispatch**  
 Covering Barkhamsted, Bridgewater, Canaan, Colebrook, Cornwall, Goshen, Hartland, Harwinton, Kent Litchfield, Morris, New Hartford, Norfolk, North Canaan, Salisbury, Sharon, Sherman, Torrington, Warren, Washington

**Northwest CT Public Safety Comm Ctr**  
 Covering Beacon Falls, Bethlehem, Oxford, Prospect, Roxbury, Woodbury

**Quinebaug Valley Emergency Comm.**  
 Covering Brooklynn, Canterbury, Chaplin, Eastford, Griswold, Hampton, Killingly, Lisbon, Plainfield, Pomfret, Scotland, Sprague, Sterling, Thompson, Voluntown Woodstock

**Tolland County Mutual Aid Dispatch**  
 Covering Andover, Ashford, Bolton, Columbia, Coventry, Ellington, Mansfield, Somers, Stafford, Tolland, Union, Willington

**Valley Shore Emergency Comm.**  
 Covering Chester, Deep River, Durham, Essex, Haddam, Killingworth, Lyme, Middletfield, Old Lyme, Westbrook