



# CONNECTICUT POLICE CHIEFS ASSOCIATION

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**Testimony of Thomas J. Sweeney**  
Retired Chief of the Glastonbury Police Department

Raised Bill No. 239

## AN ACT REQUIRING VERIFICATION TO REDUCE FALSE ALARMS

Connecticut General Assembly  
Committee on Public Safety and Security

Senator Larson, Representative Dargan and distinguished members of the Public Safety Committee

My name is Thomas Sweeney. I am a former Chief of the Glastonbury and Bridgeport Police Departments. Relevant to the substance of Raised Bill 239, I chaired the committee of the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) which engaged the security alarm industry in discussions to reduce the wasteful drain on police resources caused by needless dispatches to false alarms. The dialogue in that Committee led directly to the development and testing of Two Call Verification. That verification process is now recognized as the single most effective practice for screening out false alarm activations and in stopping needless alarm dispatch requests from being sent to police dispatch centers. For that reason, I am delighted to speak in support for Raised Bill No. 239.

Residents and businesses rely upon alarm systems to protect their homes and business. Those systems provide their users with an increased sense of security. Alarms have been proven to have a deterrent effect on burglaries and in reducing the level of loss when a crime does occur. Offsetting those positive benefits, however, is the fact that the excessively high number of dispatches to unfounded alarm calls cause an enormous and expensive drain of limited police resources.

Alarm calls are the highest category of dispatched incidents in most police agencies. Such calls often account for more than ten percent of the dispatched incidents handled by patrol officers. A 2008 review by CPCA estimated that police in Connecticut respond to over 200,000 alarm calls each year. Each of those responses tie up two patrol officers for over a half an hour in responding to the premises and in investigating the scene. Ninety seven to ninety nine percent of those dispatches will be found to have been a false activation caused by user error or an equipment malfunction. As the peak times for alarm activations usually coincide with the times businesses are opening and closing, dispatches to unfounded alarm calls often draw officers away during the very time most communities need those resources for traffic control and or the monitoring of the opening or closing of schools.

Two Call Verification is a process used to weed out unfounded activations coming from intrusion alarms. Alarm monitoring personnel make two phone calls, if necessary, to two different numbers, to determine if no emergency condition exists at the monitored premises before requesting a police dispatch. Two Call Verification has been shown to be highly effective in screening out up to ninety percent of the accidental or invalid activations from intrusion alarm systems. As a result as few as ten percent of the activations from intrusion alarm systems are forwarded to a dispatch center requesting police response.

Two Call Verification has been endorsed by both the IACP and the security industry as a best practice for screening out unnecessary alarm dispatches. The major alarm monitoring companies have embraced the concept of Two Call Verification and the proper verification procedures have been incorporated into a national ANSI standard (ANSI/CSAA CS-V-01-2004.XX). The major alarm monitoring companies have required their own customers to provide secondary contact phone numbers so they can accomplish Two Call Verification. Unfortunately some local alarm companies and their customers balk at providing secondary contact phone numbers unless a Two Call Verification requirement exists in a local ordinance or state statute. Hundreds of municipalities across the country have included a Two Call Verification requirement into recent updates of their alarm ordinances. Recognizing that the Two Call Verification requirement can be more quickly and easily mandated by a state law rather than changing the ordinances in every municipality, six states have adopted such legislation. Two others states currently have bills to that effect currently under consideration.

The Two Call Verification requirement proposed by RB No 239 places no financial cost on the State or local municipalities. Instead it will reduce the wasteful drain on police resources caused by needless responses to false alarms. The alarm monitoring industry supports the process of Two Call Verification as it allows them to more quickly weed out unfounded alarm activations and substantially reduce the number of needless alarm dispatch requests they make to the police departments on whom they depend for response in genuine emergency situations. Alarm subscribers also benefit from the two call verification process. By short stopping false alarm activations calls before they result in a police dispatch, subscribers avoid the fines levied for false alarm responses

A few small but essential changes that need to be made in the wording of the current draft of the bill to bring the bill and the national standard for Two Call Verification into proper alignment. Specifically:

- The definition of "Alarm verification" needs to be narrowly and specifically directed at the activation of an intrusion alarm system. Verification screening is never used for manually activated robbery and panic alarms nor for fire alarms. These latter activations require immediate dispatch to minimize potential injuries or catastrophic structural damage.

- The last two lines of that "Alarm verification" definition should clearly state the "....and, if such attempt to contact an authorized individual at the premises fails, by contacting an authorized person at a different telephone number or other electronic means." The person contacted on this second call may be a user or manager other than the "subscriber" and that person must be reached at a phone number, usually a cell phone number, different from the first phone number employed to access a user at the premises.

- Subsection (c) on page 3, should require that the subscriber provide as item (2) the alternate phone number and contact information for the person authorized to receive the second verification call. As noted above that could be someone other than the subscriber.

- Consistent with the first bulleted item above, the first words of Subsection (d) (1) on page 3 should read "After an activation of an intrusion alarm system but prior to....". That change would make it clear that the Two Call Verification screening requirement does not apply to manually activated robbery and panic alarm signals nor to fire alarms.

In closing I strongly urge the Committee's favorable action on this bill which has significant benefit for communities and police departments across the State.. I thank you for your time and consideration and would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Thomas J. Sweeney  
Retired Chief  
Glastonbury PD.