

DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE BILL ANALYSIS

AMENDMENT DATE: January 13, 2010  
POSITION: Neutral, note concerns

BILL NUMBER: AB 424  
AUTHOR: N. Torres

**BILL SUMMARY: Warren-911-Emergency Assistance Act: Public Education**

This bill would require the Office of the State Chief Information Officer (OCIO) to develop and implement an education campaign to instruct the public on the appropriate use of the 911 emergency telephone number system.

**FISCAL SUMMARY**

OCIO estimates initial costs of \$2.1 million and ongoing costs of \$1.4 million annually. The State Emergency Telephone Number Account, which is funded by surcharges on intrastate telephone calls, has sufficient resources to cover these costs. However, OCIO would need an appropriation before it could implement the bill.

**COMMENTS**

Finance is neutral on the bill, but has concerns regarding the potential effectiveness of this program. While there is general agreement that there are excessive phantom 911 calls, as well as people using the system for inappropriate purposes, individual law enforcement agencies and call centers may find it difficult to change public behavior. While well designed public service campaigns can be effective, it is difficult to measure actual results. Additionally, the better targeted the campaign, the more effective it will be in changing behavior. With 911, there may be different issues in different parts of the state, or with calls coming in from different technology (i.e. land lines versus cellular calls) that cause inappropriate calls to 911. Therefore it may be difficult to design an effective statewide program. Notwithstanding these concerns, misuse of 911 systems is a serious problem that delays response by to traffic collisions, fires, assaults and other emergencies, which can jeopardize lives.

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Analyst/Principal (0744) K. Amann	Date	Program Budget Manager Mark Hill	Date
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Department Deputy Director	Date
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Governor's Office:	By:	Date:	Position Approved _____
			Position Disapproved _____

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**BILL ANALYSIS** Form DF-43 (Rev 03/95 Buff)

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**ANALYSIS**

## A. Programmatic Analysis

**Existing law:**

- Requires every local public agency to establish and operate an emergency telephone system using the digits "911" under the Warren-911-Emergency Assistance Act.
- Establishes California 9-1-1 Emergency Communications Office within OCIO to assist public safety answering points to provide expedient telephone access to emergency services for all 9-1-1 callers, including funding the purchase of equipment by public safety answer points.
- Authorizes a surcharge on intrastate telephone use to fund the costs of planning and implementing the 911 emergency phone system.

**This bill would:**

- Require the OCIO to develop and implement a public education campaign to instruct the public on appropriate and inappropriate uses of the 911, which may include any of the following:
  - Education programs designed to help members of the public distinguish emergencies that require a 911 call from nonemergencies that can be handled through other types of requests for information and response;
  - Education programs about alternative systems, such as 211 and 311, that can provide nonemergency assistance to the public;
  - Education programs designed to help members of the public understand what information they can provide when calling 911 to assist the 911 relay operator or dispatcher, including, but not limited to, the caller's phone number, location, and a brief description of the emergency;
  - Education programs specifically aimed at informing school age children about the appropriate and inappropriate uses of 911; and,
  - Any other matters that the OCIO deems appropriate or that the State 911 Advisory Board (advisory board) recommends and the office approves.
- Specify that the costs to develop and campaign are qualifying administrative costs, which makes the costs reimbursable through the State Emergency Telephone Number Account, so long as the costs relate directly to 911.

**Discussion:**

According to a U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Based Policing Services, policy guide entitled, *The Use and Abuse of 911*, the National Emergency Number Association reports that phantom wireless calls account for between 25 and 70 percent of all 911 calls in some communities. The California Highway Patrol estimates that between 1.8 million and 3.6 million of the 6 million wireless 911 calls it receives annually are phantom [note, the CHP statistics predate local law enforcement assuming responsibility for 911 calls within their jurisdiction]. In addition to phantom 911

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calls, public safety answer points also receive other types of inappropriate calls, including misdialed callers who hang up, use of 911 for nonemergency law enforcement matters (property crimes not in progress), intentional prank calls, and calls from individuals who are unclear as to what constitutes an emergency. There have been calls released to the media, such as a caller complaining that a restaurant did not fill an order properly, that highlight extreme examples of 911 abuse. Additionally, the author's office indicates that some wireless users do not understand that their wireless phone may not provide a dispatcher with the caller's location automatically and that they need to provide that information. Misuse of the 911 system slows law enforcement response to true emergencies which jeopardizes lives and public safety.

This bill seeks to minimize the misuse, as well as abuse, of the 911 system by requiring OCIO to develop and implement a public education campaign. There are numerous examples of public services campaigns that seek to change public behavior. Examples include the National Forest Services Smoky Bear wildfire prevention campaigns, "Click It or Ticket" seatbelt campaigns, and "Don't Let Friends Drive Drunk" drunk driving prevention campaigns. While the Office of Traffic Safety claims that the State's concerted "Click It or Ticket" campaigns, which include public advertising in conjunction with targeted enforcement by state and local law enforcement, have contributed to California having one of the highest seat belt compliance rates in the nation, it is difficult to quantify a cause and effect relationship. Nonetheless, the misuse of 911 emergency telecommunication systems is a serious problem that delays emergency response to traffic collisions, fires, assaults and other emergencies.

#### B. Fiscal Analysis

The OCIO estimates implementation costs of \$2.1 million in the first year for community outreach, consulting services, media costs, and staff to develop the education program, with ongoing annual costs of \$1.4 million (special fund). The State Emergency Telephone Number Account has sufficient resources to cover this magnitude of expenditures. However, OCIO would need an appropriation before it could implement the program.

Code/Department Agency or Revenue Type	SO		(Fiscal Impact by Fiscal Year)							Fund Code
	LA	CO	(Dollars in Thousands)							
	RV	PROP	FC	2009-2010	FC	2010-2011	FC	2011-2012		
0502/Chief Info	SO	No		--	C	\$2,124	C	\$1,374	0022	
<u>Fund Code</u>	<u>Title</u>									
0022	Emergency Telephone Number Acct, State									