

Greene County 2005 State Legislative Priorities

WIRELESS LEGISLATION FOR GREENE COUNTY

THE ISSUE

Through the last decade we have seen a proliferation of the use of cellular/wireless phones. While these devices are incredible tools for various reasons, including productivity, safety and security, they have also created an incredible strain on our E-911 system.

Our E-911 Dispatch Center currently receives more than 200,000 phone calls per year for service. Of those calls roughly a 60-40 split of land-line phones vs. wireless phones. For the 2003 calendar year, the 911 center received 203,977 phone calls, with 81,590 calls being made from wireless users. Compare 1998 numbers of 143,632 calls and 28,425 (19.8%) from wireless users. The amount of fees and taxes the wireless user pays for this critical service-\$ 0.00.

While technology continues to evolve the 911 center is struggling to survive with an antiquated fee structure. Currently the only revenue that is received for this critical public safety program of Springfield-Greene County is from every person and business that has a land-line phone. In other words, the full 911 service is being paid by users that make up 60% of the calls and the other 40% of users of the service are not paying any fees for this critical public safety service.

LEGISLATIVE SOLUTIONS

Proposal #1 - A possible solution would be to change the definition of phones to include communication devices that have the ability to make 911 calls. This would be an effort simply clarify the statutes regarding the 911 service charge.

Proposal #2 - We are requesting that Greene County be authorized to charge a wireless tax for E-911 service. The voter approved tax would allow the county to charge a percentage of the base rate of wireless service. We would cap the rate at the weighted average of the E-911 tax of the base rate for land lines. Currently the average land line tax is approximately \$1.84 per phone line. This would generate approximately \$1.5 million, nearly covering the shortfall we are experiencing in the 911 fund.

Proposal #3 - Greene County would like the ability to ask voters for a 1/10 sales tax. Current law authorizes a minimum of a 1/8 sales tax. We would like to see another option of a lesser rate.

This entire priority item is very important to Greene County, Springfield, Republic, and the Greene County 911 Advisory Board.

STORMWATER FUNDING

THE ISSUE

In 2000, Greene County experienced severe flooding in the southern portion of the county. This flooding caused significant damage to 15 homes and posed a danger to many citizens in the Shadowood neighborhood. Through the efforts of the County Commission and with the assistance of Congressman Blunt in Washington we were able to secure significant federal moneys to clear the drainage way.

Even though we had secured money to assist Greene County in this project the needs far outweighed the funds available. The Missouri Legislature each year authorizes stormwater funds that are split 50/50 between grants and loans. The grants are funded by the issuance of stormwater bonds. A jurisdiction can use 5 years of the grant money for a single project, which Greene County committed to for the Shadowood project. The total of the grant funds to be used was an average of \$220,000 per year or \$1.1 million. For the last two years the funds have been authorized by the legislature but the bonds have not been sold and the grants have not been funded. Greene County has a \$700,000 tax/grant anticipation note outstanding on the project and would like to receive the grant money to complete the project.

LEGISLATIVE SOLUTIONS

We would ask the Missouri Legislature to continue to authorize the funding for stormwater funding. Greene County would also like the Legislature to work with Governor-Elect Blunt to get the bonds authorized to be sold which would start the grants flowing to the local jurisdictions.

LAW ENFORCEMENT FUNDING

THE ISSUE

There are two main issues of law enforcement funding that have been cut over the last few years. The first and most costly for Greene County is the \$2.50 cut in the prisoner per diem. The per diem amount has been reduced from \$22.50 to \$20.00 per day per inmate. This reduction amounts to nearly \$400,000 each and every year that Greene County is paying to house the State of Missouri inmates. The juvenile per diem rate has also been reduced although it is not as costly to the county.

The second issue is the funding of Juvenile employee salaries. The 89th General Assembly in 1998 passed HB-971 making major changes to the funding of Juvenile Salaries. HB-971 provided for the State to reimburse counties for 25% of the salaries based on 1997 salaries and the percentage would escalate by 5% per year until the year beginning July 1, 2002, at that point counties would receive a salary reimbursement of 50%. In 2002, the State of Missouri began experiencing severe financial difficulties and subsequently reduced the amount of the reimbursement back to 25% of the 1997 level. This reduction has cost Greene County more than \$240,000 per year for the last three years.

LEGISLATIVE SOLUTIONS

Greene County would like the State of Missouri to authorize an increase in the per diem rates back to the previously funded rates. The jail rate was previously funded at \$22.5 and the juvenile rate was \$17.5.

Greene County would also like the State to at a minimum go back to funding the 50% of juvenile salaries as was intended in HB-971. HB-971 also authorized the State to pay the entire salaries for the salaries in multi county circuits, we believe this is a wrongful differential treatment for the counties of the State of Missouri. We are asking for full funding for the juvenile court employees of Greene County. The total of this request for Greene County is \$1.85 million.

SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM FUNDING

THE ISSUE

The Solid Waste Management Program (SWMP) is an essential program that needs to be funded at the current level. The SWMP is a critical partner with the Solid Waste Districts, Greene County is in District "O", in meeting previously set statewide and local goals and providing essential oversight and technical assistance to the Solid Waste Districts. The SWMP must have sufficient resources to continue managing permitting, enforcement, resource planning, grant management, and program administration.

LEGISLATIVE SOLUTIONS

We are asking for the following sources of funding for the SWMP:

1. Apply the landfill tipping fee surcharge to solid waste hauled directly to landfills in other states. Currently, the surcharge only applies to waste exported out of state if the waste is first processed at a Missouri transfer station. It is estimated that applying this fee to all exported waste would generate approximately \$2.0 million per year.
2. Increase permitting and inspection fees to partially replace General Revenue funds.
3. Increase the amount of landfill tipping fee surcharge.

Other Priorities

Assessment of Business Personal Property- Greene County supports legislation that will establish a method of valuing depreciable business personal property utilizing uniform valuation tables for depreciable business personal property.

Bid Requirement Limits - RSMo 50.660 requires the counties to obtain bids for anything that is over \$4,500. We would like to see this limit raised to \$7,500 this additional amount would allow counties to operate in a more efficient manner.

CAFO's – Local Control - RSMo 192.300 authorizes County Commissioners to adopt ordinances to enhance public health. RSMo 192.300 allows us to provide for local control of public health issues that include Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations(CAFO's). We oppose any legislation that would weaken Greene County's ability to locally address public health issues.

Crime Lab for Southwest Missouri - Greene County would like the State of Missouri to authorize a Crime Lab in Springfield, not only authorize the lab but commit to the full funding of the lab in the State's FY 2006-07. The anticipated costs of operations are \$1.0 million per year.

Election Reimbursement - We believe the State of Missouri should pay for the cost of the even numbered year primary and general elections. Currently the State pays the cost of the Presidential Preference Primary, but the costs for the primary and general elections are shouldered by the county.

Sequestered Jury Reimbursement - The reimbursement that counties receive for sequestered juries is \$3.50/day per juror. That does not even reimburse the counties for a meal a day, let alone pay for lodging. Greene County would like to be reimbursed totally for the cost of sequestering juries. As an example, the Delong murder trial lasted 20 days and cost Greene County more than \$ 50,000.

Special Funds Created by Legislature - Various special funds have been created by the legislature over the years that erode the revenues of counties across the state. These funds take money that would otherwise be county general revenue under the control of the statutorily authorized budget authority, the County Commission, and place the money in accounts that typically have no budgetary oversight or controls. This diversion of county revenue is not proper and as was the case with Amendment 3, the general population does not like the diversion of funds. We would ask that you would remove all of these funds and move the revenue back to county general revenue. At the very least we would ask for budgeting and audit requirements to be placed on these funds that require the same treatment as all other county revenues and expenditures.

Streamlined Sales and Use Tax Agreement - Support efforts to bring Missouri into compliance with the agreement, as long as the compliance does not jeopardize the ability of Greene County to collect the currently authorized taxes. There needs to be a clarification in the tax law that allows a jurisdiction without a use tax to collect the sales tax that has been authorized by voters. Without tweaking the language of the law only jurisdictions with a use tax may be authorized to collect the internet taxes.

Operations of County Government - No Fiscal Impact to the State of Missouri.

Death Certificates

RSMO 193.265.2 allows a \$13 fee for death certificates. We would like to increase this fee to \$15.

Bad Check Collection Fee Min fee \$10 up to \$25 Max \$50 up to \$75

Currently the minimum fee for the collection of bad checks is \$10 and the maximum fee is \$50. We would like to raise the fee allowed to be collected by the Prosecuting Attorney's office in the recovery of bad checks written to local individuals and businesses to \$25 for the minimum fee and \$75 for the maximum fee. With the majority of the checks that are collected being at the minimum fee level, this increase would double the amount the Prosecuting Attorney receives for operating his office.

For further information, please contact the Greene County Commission at 868.4112

or

the Greene County Budget Officer at 417.868.4892