



## WESTMINSTER

### PLEASE VOTE NO

#### HB20-1282 – Radio Communications Policies of Government Entities

The Westminster Police Department encrypted its public safety channels in 2014, not only to protect first responders but also the community, to include our media partners. Since that time the media has expressed unhappiness with encryption - not because they don't get the information they want, but that it is not in real-time...immediate.

The media is in the business of selling news; being the first on scene is touted in their industry. The need to best protect citizens and officers should not be compromised by personal interests of the general public nor by the business-motivated desires of the media.

Prior to the City encrypting its radio channels numerous concerning events occurred which weighed into the decision to encrypt. Each of these examples are of media premature involvement prior to the City's channels being encrypted or information gained through another agency's unencrypted channels:

- After an officer-involved shooting, our public information officers began receiving inquiries from local media before internal notifications could be made to the officer's family.
- A patrol officer was knocked unconscious as a result of responding to a bar fight and was subsequently transported to the hospital. Media contacted Westminster referencing the injured officer even though the information had not been released.
- In a similar case, an officer was shot and because of radio traffic scanned from an unencrypted channel, a reporter pieced information together to figure out who the involved officer was. This time the media was less willing to withhold the name until proper notifications had been made. They commented we had had enough time and they were going to release the name.
- A Westminster officer was shot and transported to the hospital. Media had the officer's name even before family notifications could be made. They agreed to withhold the name until we were able to notify the family.
- Two citizens in Westminster had been mugged. A local TV reporter monitored police radio traffic and contacted the mugging victims at their home. The victims were upset at the media contact and believed the police had disclosed their names and address. These victims refused to cooperate with the police investigation until they later learned the reporter was using a scanner to develop a story.
- Information was aired to several north metro law enforcement agencies reference a patrol car that was stolen, along with associated details. Local public information officers received numerous real time media inquiries based on their scanning of unencrypted radios of surrounding agencies.

Preservation of the safety of victims, witnesses and police officers were and continues to be foundational to the City's decision to encrypt. In addition, the City has worked cooperatively and efficiently in responding to the media's requests for information in a manner that does not compromise the safety of victims and their families involved in a criminal incident.