Cuts to State Police Staff Mean Cuts to Public Safety

Proposed Closure of 16 Locally-Based Dispatching Units
Currently ISP has telecommunications staff at each of the 20 State Police district headquarters. The telecommunicators provide dispatching for the state police and assist many law enforcement and public safety agencies in their areas. Gov. Quinn proposes closing 16 of these units, cutting telecommunications staff and consolidating the remaining operations into just four call centers: Chicago, Sterling, Springfield and DuQuoin.

Staffing Cuts Delay Response
The governor proposes to lay off 40 telecommunications staff statewide and eliminate another 20 positions through attrition. This will impact the ability of the State Police to respond swiftly and effectively to calls for help. It isn’t really a “consolidation” plan, but a service decimation plan, that will undermine the safety of Illinois citizens.

Centralizing Dispatch Will Jeopardize Safety
These cutbacks would jeopardize the safety of state troopers and of citizens in need of help. Locally based telecommunicators know the terrain well and can be more responsive to callers in an emergency, many of whom are unsure of their exact location. By knowing the area, they can help identify the location of the caller so that police can respond. By asking questions like “what do you see around you,” “where are you coming from and going to,” and “how long since you passed a certain landmark” they are able to locate where help is needed. A telecommunicator hundreds of miles away couldn’t do this.

Here are some examples provided by ISP Telecommunicators:

- I took a cellular 911 call from a 17 year old that had decided he wanted to end his life. He had taken several pills and it was apparent the pills were starting to take effect. He had no idea where he was. He had started out from his home in Missouri and started driving. I made him describe to me what roads he had taken. He had pulled into a subdivision but there weren’t any road markers. I was able to figure out where he was, made calls to the county he was in and I made him stay awake and sing to me, honk his horn, anything I could think of to keep him awake until a deputy got to him. If I had not been familiar with the small, rural area where he was, this man probably would not be here today.

- I had an incident one night when an officer on a traffic stop could only yell on the radio he needed emergency assistance - the subject had a gun and he was on IL37 at Goins Road. The trooper could not give any additional information as he was fighting for his life. Troopers starting calling up asking where that was. Someone out of district taking that call would not have known.

Centralizing Dispatch Will Disrupt Relationships with Law Enforcement
Being in the same area with local law enforcement, and in the same work location as the state troopers, telecommunicators are able to develop a strong working relationship which pays off in emergencies. If dispatch is centralized, these relationships cannot be replicated.

Each State Police district has many local law enforcement and emergency response agencies with which it interacts. Knowing jurisdictions and locations as who to call for EMS, fire, and backup is of utmost importance. A mapping system is no substitute for the personal knowledge and personal relationships that locally-based dispatchers have.

Some ISP Headquarters Will Have No Staff When Troopers Are in the Field
When all officers are out responding to calls, telecommunicators keep the HQs open and can get a quick response if someone shows up who is in trouble.

Purported Saving Don’t Take Capital Investments into Account
The plan does not assure any real savings to state government. The four Districts that will contain centralized dispatch are not large enough to accommodate the necessary staff, nor do they have sufficient equipment. Illinois State Police indicated in appropriations committee and in a capital request that they will need an additional capital appropriation of $15 million to implement that change. Nor has the telecommunications reprogramming required to reconfigure the STAR COM system been figured into the costs. These hard costs will outweigh payroll savings in FY 13 and many years beyond.