



# **Request for City Council Committee Action from the Department of Intergovernmental Relations**

**Date:** February 20, 2014

**To:** Chair Elizabeth Glidden and Vice Chair Alondra Cano

**Referral to:** Intergovernmental Relations Committee

**Subject:** 2014 Legislative Agenda

**Recommendation:** Approve an amendment to the Public Safety Section: General Public Safety. After the last bullet insert the following:

- **Measures that devalue a mobile device that has been stolen. Measures could include but not be limited to technological components incorporated into the device that make the device inoperable as well as identification and recording of the sale of used devices, a registry for lost or stolen devices, and/or the criminalization of tampering with unique hardware IDs on cell phones.**

## **Department Information**

Prepared by: Gene Ranieri, Director, IGR

Approved by: \_\_\_\_\_

Presenters in Committee: Gene Ranieri

## **Supporting Information**

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) in 2012 issued a "commission document" that noted the increase in cell phone thefts. While approximately 33% of all thefts nationwide, the FCC noted that cell phone theft was higher than the national average in New York City (40%), and Washington D.C. (38%). The FCC document raised concern about cell phone thefts and identified several measures that wireless carriers would implement to deter cell phone thefts. Among them were the implementation of a database to prevent the use of stolen smartphones, encourage users to lock their phones with passwords, and initiate a public education program on how to protect a smart phone and the user.

In addition to the industry efforts announced in 2012, the Congress and the states of California and Minnesota have introduced legislation that would require "kill switches" on cell phones. The Minnesota legislation (HF1952) defines a "kill switch" to be a functionality that can render the device completely inoperable in the event of a theft or loss. Similar legislation has been introduced in the U.S. Senate. Senator Klobuchar is an author of the

bill. The wireless industry is opposed to the legislation because of concerns regarding the safety of the phone's data and that many phones now contain this capability.

Other possible measures include a process that requires a seller of a phone to present identification to a licensed cell phone retailer or the establishment of a registry of stolen or lost phones.