

JOHN SPIROS

State Representative • 86th Assembly District

Senate Bill 277

October 4, 2017

Testimony from Rep. Spiros

Hello, and thank you Chairman and members of the Senate Committee on Transportation and Veterans Affairs for allowing me to have the opportunity to share my testimony with you today regarding Senate Bill 277, which would help to address the issue of commercial vehicle theft in Wisconsin.

This bill increases the penalty for taking, driving, or operating a commercial vehicle without consent. Currently the penalty for this crime is the same regardless of whether that vehicle is a commercial or personal vehicle. Under the bill the penalty would be increased to a Class H felony for driving or operating a commercial vehicle without consent, and a Class G felony for taking and driving a commercial vehicle without consent. The bill would also create a new penalty for theft when the value of the property exceeds \$100,000. Under our current law, the highest penalty encompasses all thefts where the value exceeds \$10,000. In the case of cargo theft, the value of the property stolen almost always greatly exceeds that amount.

Statistics show that cargo and commercial vehicle theft has been increasing, with recorded cases increasing 14% from the second to third quarter of 2016. In addition, more than half of these cases of theft involve a truckload of commercial goods, with the average value loss being around \$150,000. Of the recorded incidents of this kind of theft so far in 2017, 58% of incidents involved theft of a trucking vehicle and 54% involved theft of cargo.

In addition to the actual dollar amount lost from the cost of the vehicle and goods, there are other costs and victims of commercial vehicle theft as well. It negatively impacts employees who may be at risk of personal injury during a theft, retailers who lose merchandise, shipping companies who lose the value of their vehicle or the cost of downtime until it is returned, and consumers who pay more for merchandise to make up for cargo theft. Wisconsin has a disproportionate number of some of the country's largest trucking companies, meaning our state's businesses are more at risk of becoming the victim of this type of theft.

The purpose of this bill is simply to ensure the penalties for commercial vehicle theft and cargo theft take into account the additional costs the perpetrators inflict on others.

Thank you again for allowing me the opportunity to share testimony in support of this bill, and I welcome any questions.

Testimony in Support of SB – 277 (Sen. Petrowski)

Senate Transportation Committee

Mr. Chairman and Committee Members:

On behalf of the 1,100 plus members of the Wisconsin Motor Carriers Association I register in support of AB -342, relating to taking, driving or operating a commercial vehicle without consent and providing criminal penalties. This common sense legislation is aimed at protecting the huge investment trucking companies and operators have in their equipment and makes the penalty fit the crime concerning the theft of the very vehicles that provide their livelihood.

The cost of a semi-tractor/trailer combination can range from \$100,000 to \$175,000 depending on the specific job the truck is being used for; dry van, flatbed, tanker, refrigeration unit, etc. This dollar amount is as much for one unit as many people pay for a home. Besides the loss of revenue from a stolen truck being out of service other associated costs include recovery costs for towing, storage, and pickup and delivery to the home terminal. Not only does this bill increase the potential jail-time by two and a half years for theft of a commercial vehicle worth \$100,000 or more, more importantly it requires a person who causes damage to a commercial vehicle to pay restitution.

For these reasons I strongly urge the committee to move this legislation forward and support AB-342.

Thank you.

Neal Kedzie, President
Wisconsin Motor Carriers Association