



STATE REPRESENTATIVE

JESSE JAMES

February 9th, 2022

Testimony of Representative James in favor of AB 891

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and other committee members, for holding this hearing on Assembly Bill 891. This bill will hold those accountable who choose to steal a person or multiple persons' mail. I am hoping these simple measures and modifications to our current statutes may deter those who choose to go 'mailbox fishing' and steal mail from our Wisconsin residents.

Currently, it is a Class A misdemeanor for a person who steals less than 10 pieces of mail, a Class I felony for 10-30 pieces of mail, and a Class H felony for anything over 30 pieces. This legislation proposes to change these classifications. If a person steals three pieces of mail or less it would be a Class A misdemeanor, and over three pieces of mail would be a Class I felony. This is simple, common-sense legislation which will benefit our communities in Wisconsin.

On December 23, many fell victim to mail theft in both Chippewa and Eau Claire counties; it got to the point where residents in the town of Lafayette were told to call the clerk or the Chippewa County Sheriff's Department if they had not received their tax statements already. Fortunately, many of these statements were recovered and more charges are expected. This is a case of deliberate intent to deprive these people of their mail, and I believe cases like this should be held to a higher standard of accountability.

In Wausau, they have an ongoing mail theft problem. On January 29th, they were able to arrest one man they believed was involved in this ring. Police discovered multiple pieces of reported stolen mail including checks, gift cards, and other forms of money. The judge set the suspect's bond at \$5,000 cash, and this man is currently facing a misdemeanor charge.

I was contacted by constituents from the Town of Ludington. On December 17, a female suspect approached their residence and made a strange request for them to return the lighter they borrowed from her. After an unproductive conversation, the suspect left the couple's house. On her way home, she decided to check their neighbors' mailboxes and took what she wanted out of them. Thanks to the tracks her car left in the fresh snow, she was easily caught and is now facing charges of felony bail jumping, theft of mail (for less than 10 pieces), and misdemeanor theft.

As you can see, these are just some of the recent stories of mail theft. This is a continuous, statewide issue and I believe this legislation is appropriate and necessary to address it. Thank you for your consideration and support.