



January 17th, 2024

Senator Tomczyk, Chair

Members of the Senate Committee on Transportation and Local Government

Testimony on 2023 Senate Bill 525

Relating to: tinting windows on government-owned vehicles.

Thank you, Chairman Tomczyk and other members of the committee, for hearing my testimony on Senate Bill 525 today. As a law enforcement officer, I can speak on the importance of this issue first hand.

As we all know, during the summer months, it can get pretty hot outside, and we've all had that unpleasant experience of getting into our cars after its been parked outside for extended periods of time. The temperature inside a police vehicle can reach a dangerously high temperature, which can be dangerous for officers, K-9 officers, passengers, and even equipment. While police vehicles are equipped with multiple systems to ensure it is kept at safe temperature, systems can fail, trapping heat inside. For K-9 units particularly, this can be a life-threatening.

The tint darkness of a window can help with keeping dangerously high heat out of these squad cars, should the safety systems fail. Window tints are measured by the transmission of visible light, so the lower the tint percentage, the darker the tint, the less light that can get through. Tinting a car's window helps block out ultraviolet and infrared light, which can keep a vehicle cooler, thus protecting those inside as well as the expensive equipment that can get damaged in severe heat. In addition to keeping light and heat out, tinting windows creates a layer of privacy and security for the car by shielding the contents of the interior, including individuals in the vehicle, which can be beneficial for law enforcement as well.

Under current law, police vehicles, and all other government owned vehicles, must abide by the standard limits for window tinting, allowing up to 50% tint darkness for the front windows of a car and up to 35% tint darkness for the rear. SB 525 would exempt any government owned vehicle from these limits, allowing the tint darkness to be darker, if it is deemed necessary for the protection of personnel, passengers, and equipment. Although the original intent of the bill stemmed from helping our law enforcement agencies, we recognized the potential benefit for other government vehicles for the purposes of safety and security.

A lot of taxpayer dollars go towards the purchase and up keep of these vehicles. Providing the opportunity to protect our K-9 officers, expensive equipment, and provide another layer of security is just one small thing we can do to help make sure more money isn't wasted repairing and replacing them. Thank you, and I will take any questions at this time.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jesse James".

Senator Jesse James

23rd Senate District

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Testimony of Wisconsin Department of Transportation
Assistant Deputy Secretary Joel Nilsestuen
Before the Senate Committee on Transportation and Local Government
January 17, 2024

Re: Senate Bill 525, relating to tinting windows on government-owned vehicles.

Thank you, Chairman Tomczyk, and members of the committee for your consideration of the department's input on considering the department's input on Senate Bill 525, relating to tinting windows on government-owned vehicles.

The use of window tint on vehicles operated by law enforcement and other first responders is a common safety and privacy measure used by agencies across the United States. There are 27 other states, including Minnesota and Iowa, with window tint exemptions for law enforcement vehicles. Senate Bill 525 would exempt government owned vehicles, including those owned by law enforcement agencies in Wisconsin, from current window tint regulations. The language in this bill is similar to the language used in other state's regulations. Having darker window tint is necessary for safety and privacy in law enforcement operations.

There have been two K-9 heat related deaths in Wisconsin which occurred in 2015 and 2023. Window tint provides protection from heat and UV rays that are harmful to humans and dogs. During hot days, the air conditioning in squad cars often has difficulty in keeping the vehicle cool enough when stationary for an extended period of time. This often happens during a critical incident, crash scene, or training. Once the vehicle has exceeded the specified temperature the heat alarm is activated, and the vehicle must be driven to cool it down. Window tint would slow the rate in which a vehicle heats and prevent false vehicle heat alarms from direct sunlight on a sensor. Further, the tint allows for increased privacy for a K-9 and thereby reducing agitation from bystanders.

During investigative operations, window tint can protect sensitive equipment and information from bystanders and suspects, such as cameras and personally identifiable information, including criminal history or driver records, and other sensitive information displayed on squad vehicle computer. Window tint is important to providing privacy and safety for informants, crime victims or human trafficking victims while being transported by law enforcement. This assurance of privacy often helps with cooperation, protects the victim's dignity, and minimizes discomfort. Last, window tint can help with covert law enforcement operations, especially when conducting surveillance or undercover investigations in sensitive or high-profile cases.

The ability to use window tint at a darker level than is permitted by state regulations would allow law enforcement to better protect the safety and security of K-9s, persons being transported by law enforcement, investigative information, and equipment.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We are happy to answer any questions you may have.

Good morning, Chief of Police Alan Schrank with the Linden Police Department, I have proudly served since 2008 in law enforcement, and dual roles as a fire fighter and Emergency Medical Responder.

I am here today to testify in support of the 2023 Senate Bill 525, an act to create 347.02 (8) of the Wisconsin Statutes relating to tinting of windows on government owned vehicles.

Since December of 2021 I have been advocating and working closely with my local elected officials Rep. Novak & Sen. Marklein regarding exempting law enforcement vehicles from window tinting % restrictions.

Window tints are measured by the transmission of visible light, so the lower the tint percentage, the darker the tint, the less light that can get through. Tinting a vehicle window helps block out ultraviolet and infrared light, which can keep a vehicle cooler. In addition to keeping light and heat out, tinting windows creates a layer of privacy and security for the vehicle by shielding the contents of the interior, including individuals in the vehicle, which can be beneficial for law enforcement as well.

Currently no exemption exists within the Wisconsin statutes exempting a law enforcement vehicle or government owned vehicles from following the current in place % restrictions. Under WI Trans 305.32 all vehicle vent and front side windows tinting film must present 50% and rear window 35% passage of visible light striking the windows.

Tinting of law enforcement vehicles will keep the law enforcement officer safe and cool, as well as law enforcement K9 Officers safe from suffering from heat-related injuries.

Law Enforcement vehicles also have expensive electronic equipment to include mobile data computer, printer, communication radios, radar, lidar, to name a few expensive equipment items that are within a law enforcement vehicle and are subject to extreme Wisconsin heat and sun.

A lot of taxpayer dollars goes towards the purchasing and up keep of law enforcement vehicles and the equipment within a law enforcement vehicle. Providing the opportunity to protect our law enforcement officers, K-9 officers, expensive equipment, and provide another layer of security is something this bill can do to help make sure more money isn't wasted repairing and replacing them.

On behalf of the Linden Police Department thank you for your time today. I ask for your sincere consideration of passing 2023 Senate Bill 525 for Wisconsin Law Enforcement Vehicles and all Wisconsin Government owned vehicles, endorsed by the Wisconsin Chiefs of Police Association & Badger Sheriff's Association.

Thank You