



Van H. Wanggaard

Wisconsin State Senator

Testimony on Senate Bill 65

Thank you, Mr. Vice Chairman and committee members, for attending today's hearing on Senate Bill 65, which builds upon the success we've had with 2023 Act 1, allowing for the vehicles of repeat reckless drivers to be impounded.

This bill allows a local government to impound a vehicle that violates Wisconsin's reckless driving law, and keep the vehicle impounded until costs of towing the vehicle and any outstanding fines are paid. To be clear, this bill does allow local governments to impound recklessly driven vehicles on the first offense, however it does not require it.

Further, this bill protects innocent owners by requiring law enforcement to make a reasonable effort to determine if the vehicle has been reported stolen. If so, the vehicle may be returned to the owner at no charge. If a stolen vehicle is unclaimed for 60 days after impoundment, the local government may dispose of the vehicle as it would any abandoned vehicle.

This morning, I introduced an amendment at the request of the City of Milwaukee. The amendment which you should have before you, makes clear an impoundment can occur whether or not the reckless driving violation is treated as a traffic citation or as a criminal charge.

I'm pleased to say this bill is supported by the Wisconsin Chiefs of Police, and Wisconsin Professional Police Association, and was drafted in concert with the city of Milwaukee, as it will make Wisconsin's streets safer.

Thank you in advance for your support.

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Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 65

Thank you, Chairman Wanggaard and members of the Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety, for meeting today to hear public testimony on Senate Bill 65, which strengthens Wisconsin's towing and impounding statutes to address reckless driving.

In 2023, Wisconsin Act 1 allowed municipalities to pass an ordinance allowing the towing of vehicles that are recklessly driving, the owner of the vehicle, and had previous unpaid fines. This legislation was a vital first step in equipping municipalities with tools to curb reckless driving.

In September of 2023, the Milwaukee Common Council *unanimously* passed a resolution urging the State Legislature to amend state towing laws. It stated: "Law enforcement needs the tools to immediately keep dangerous drivers off the road, regardless of whether it is their first time being caught, own the cars in question or have the means to pay previous fines." This was later amended to exclude stolen vehicles and avoid an extra burden to the owners.

This follows a promising trend of Milwaukee adopting tougher approaches to reckless driving. In October of 2024, City Attorney Evan Goyke announced his office would no longer dismiss or amend reckless driving charges. This follows a surge in citations: from 371 in 2021 to 603 in 2024—a trend that doesn't include the countless drivers who flee or refuse to stop.

Senate Bill 65 responds directly to Milwaukee's call by eliminating the requirements that a vehicle's driver own it or have unpaid fines, thus allowing towing on a first offense. This is not a mandate—officers retain discretion to ensure stops are safe for the community, the driver, and themselves. Additionally, owners of stolen vehicles would be exempt from towing, impoundment, or storage fees, resolving the Council's concerns. Municipalities must still pass an ordinance to adopt these changes, a provision unchanged from 2023 Wisconsin Act 1.

Support for accountability is growing, from grassroots activists to City Hall. Senate Bill 65 merely answers the call from local elected leaders to give them the tools to better control the reckless driving epidemic.

Bob Donovan

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Robert B. Donovan".

State Representative
61ST Assembly District



JESSIE RODRIGUEZ

STATE REPRESENTATIVE ★ 21ST ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Testimony Senate Bill 65

Senate Committee on Judiciary & Public Safety

Thursday March 13th, 2025

Good morning Chairman Wanggaard & committee members. Thank you for holding a public hearing on Senate Bill 65 relating to the impoundment of vehicles used in certain reckless driving offenses. I would like to thank Representative Donovan & Senator Wanggaard for introducing this legislation as reckless driving has significantly impacted my district.

Reckless driving has reached unprecedented levels in Milwaukee County in recent years. These incidents have increased since 2014 and are now at a higher rate than most of the country. Local governments are not the only entities who can help in reducing this problem. The state can help local law enforcement by passing legislation, such as Senate Bill 65, to give our local governments another tool to reduce reckless driving.

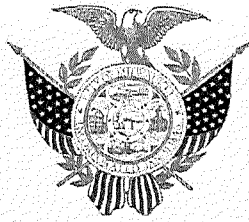
Under current law, a political subdivision may enact an ordinance authorizing law enforcement officers to impound vehicles used in reckless driving offenses. The person cited for reckless driving must be the owner of the vehicle and has a previous reckless driving conviction where the fine was not paid in full.

Senate Bill 65 will authorize the impoundment of any vehicle used in a reckless driving offense, regardless of ownership of the vehicle or prior record of the driver. This would allow local law enforcement to reduce the number of reckless driving incidents and reduce the number of stolen vehicles used in such incidents.

Provisions are written in the bill to allow law enforcement to return the vehicle if an officer determines that the vehicle was stolen, in which case, the vehicle can be returned back to the owner without payment of a fee or charge.

These changes will dramatically reduce incidents of reckless driving as our local officials will be able to hold reckless drivers accountable regardless of their driving records or whether they own the vehicle they used to commit the offense. This gives law enforcement a much stronger tool to continue to keep our communities safe.

Thank you for holding a public hearing on Senate Bill 65. I look forward to your support for its passage.



CITY OF MILWAUKEE

City Hall, 200 E. Wells Street, Milwaukee, WI 53202 • www.city.milwaukee.gov

March 12, 2025

Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety

Dear Chair Wanggaard, Vice Chair James, and
Members of the Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety,

We are writing today in strong support of Senate Bill 65 relating to the impounding of vehicles used in certain reckless driving offenses.

We have discussed with one of the bill co-authors, Rep. Donovan, how reckless driving continues its high impact across the great State of Wisconsin and the City of Milwaukee. It risks and takes human lives, imposes costs on local services, and exacts a heavy burden on impacted families and overall quality of life.

As you may recall, in September of 2023, with Ald. Westmoreland as the lead sponsor, the Milwaukee Common Council unanimously passed a resolution asking the State Legislature to amend the state statutes governing the towing of vehicles used by reckless drivers. This resolution sought to allow the towing of all vehicles used in incidents recklessly driving regardless of ownership or ticket history. This was later amended to not include stolen vehicles to prevent any unnecessary burden on the vehicle owner.

Last session, 2023 Wisconsin Act 1 was signed into law. This legislation was a worthy first step in giving more tools to curb the reckless driving epidemic that has not slowed.

More needs to be done.

We respectfully request state law be amended to expand 2023 Wisconsin Act 1 by removing any prerequisites for towing. Reckless drivers should pay the costs related to the towing, impoundment, and storage of their vehicles in addition to any unpaid fines to have them returned. The owners of stolen vehicles used for reckless driving would not be required to pay any related costs.

It is our feeling that this change will have benefits for many generations to come and will send a strong message to those drivers that violate reckless driving laws and, by their thoughtless actions, make all of us less safe.

Thank you for commitment to working towards common-sense solutions to this problem and your continued support of this measure.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lamont Westmoreland'.

Lamont Westmoreland
Alderman, 5th District

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Scott P. Spiker'.

Scott P. Spiker
Alderman, 13th District

