



Van H. Wanggaard

Wisconsin State Senator

Testimony on Senate Bill 66

Thank you, Mr. Vice Chairman, and committee members for attending today's hearing on Senate Bill 66, which prohibits license plate concealment devices. This bill is based on a similar law in Tennessee.

In recent years, it has become more common for police officers to have AI-powered cameras (Flock cameras) that can automatically read license plates. Recently, a car triggered an alert on a Flock camera as a stolen car. Police officers quickly responded and located the suspect vehicle. Unfortunately, the license plate on the car was not the same as what triggered the alert, making it hard to confirm the suspect vehicle. Through investigative work, the police realized the license plate on the suspect vehicle had been switched.

Police then initiated a traffic stop, which the suspect fled. While the pursuit was stopped for safety reasons, the suspect continued to drive recklessly, and ultimately crashed several miles away. While investigating the crash scene, police officers discovered a license plate flipping device, which explained how the vehicle was able to switch plates and avoid detection.

License plate "flippers" are not the only type of license plate concealment devices. I have seen social media advertisements for "concealment stickers" which, while appearing normal to the naked eye, obscures, hides or conceals what is underneath that sticker to a camera. These stickers can be used to hide or change letters or numbers, like from an eight to a zero, or a V to a W, or covering the month or year of registration of a vehicle, making it more difficult for law enforcement and private entities using cameras as security to identify suspect vehicles.

Under the bill, the sale, possession, purchase, use, and installation of license plate concealment devices is now a crime. A violation of the law would be punishment by a \$1,000 fine or 90 days in jail or both.

I hope this common-sense public safety and traffic safety law will have your support.

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Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 66

Thank you, Chairman Wanggaard and members of the Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety, for convening today to hear public testimony on Senate Bill 66. This critical legislation addresses the growing threat posed by registration concealment devices, commonly known as "license plate flippers," which criminals increasingly exploit to evade law enforcement, facilitate criminal activity, and jeopardize public safety across Wisconsin.

Our law enforcement agencies are skilled, but the rise of "flippers" make it more difficult for officers to do their job. These manual, electronic, or mechanical devices designed to switch, hide, or alter license plates—presents a direct challenge to law enforcement's ability to identify and apprehend dangerous individuals. Current law requires that all motor vehicles display their Department of Transportation-issued registration plates and decals clearly. However, without specific prohibitions on concealment devices, law enforcement lacks the tools to address this emerging threat effectively. While this technology is relatively new, we must act decisively to stop its proliferation before it becomes a widespread problem.

Senate Bill 66 responds directly to this challenge by prohibiting the sale, possession, purchase, installation, and use of registration plate concealment devices. It defines these devices as any mechanism designed to switch between plates, obstruct or conceal a plate, or alter its appearance to render the registration number unreadable. The bill also prohibits equipping a vehicle with such a device. Violations would be punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000, imprisonment for up to 90 days, or both. Additionally, vehicles equipped with these devices may be impounded, with reasonable towing and impoundment costs assessed to the owner.

This legislation is a targeted tool for law enforcement to enhance public safety. By equipping law enforcement with the authority to address flippers, Senate Bill 66 closes a dangerous gap in state statute that criminals can exploit to evade accountability. This is a commonsense measure that strengthens our ability to hold criminals accountable and keep our roads safe. I urge the committee to support this bill and provide law enforcement with the tools they need to combat the misuse of registration concealment devices. Thank you for your consideration.

Bob Donovan

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

State Representative
61st Assembly District



To: Members, Assembly Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety
From: Badger State Sheriffs' Association (BSSA)
Wisconsin Sheriffs and Deputy Sheriffs Association (WS&DSA)
Date: March 13, 2025
RE: Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 66

Chairman Wanggaard, Committee members, thank you for the opportunity to testify today on SB 66. I am Dodge County Sheriff Dale Schmidt. I am also the Past President for BSSA and a member of the joint BSSA and WS&DSA legislative committee.

There have been several times in my role as a Sheriff where we see new technology being deployed by criminals. This was what happened in Dodge County in 2023, where there was a stolen vehicle driven by an individual with multiple warrants in which our LPR flagged the car as stolen. By the time my deputies caught up with him, his license plate had changed. Turns out he had one of those James Bond-type license plate flippers, which I have now found you can buy on Amazon and use in Wisconsin with no consequence.

This incident underscores the necessity of Senate Bill 66, which prohibits the possession, sale, purchase, installation, and use of registration plate concealment devices. These devices, whether manual, electronic, or mechanical, allow individuals to switch between multiple plates, obscure their license plates from view, or alter the appearance of plates to avoid detection. Criminals are using this technology to evade law enforcement, making it harder to track stolen vehicles, enforce traffic laws, and ensure public safety.

Current law requires that all registered motor vehicles display their assigned license plates in a visible manner. SB 66 closes a dangerous loophole that criminals have been exploiting. By making it illegal to possess or use these devices, the bill provides law enforcement with an important tool to prevent their use in vehicle theft, human trafficking, and other crimes. Additionally, the penalties outlined in SB 66—a fine of up to \$1,000 or imprisonment of up to 90 days, along with potential vehicle impoundment—serve as a strong deterrent against their use.

The ability for law enforcement to accurately identify vehicles is critical to keeping our communities safe. This legislation will help prevent criminals from skirting the law and enhance the ability of officers to do their jobs effectively. I urge the committee to support SB 66 and help ensure that these dangerous devices are no longer accessible in Wisconsin.

I'd like to thank the authors for their help with this bill and appreciate the committee's time and consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions.

The Badger State Sheriffs' Association represents all of Wisconsin's 72 elected county sheriffs. The Wisconsin Sheriffs and Deputy Sheriffs Association is a professional organization representing over 1,000 members, including sheriffs, deputies, and jail officers. Our organizations have a joint legislative committee and work closely on public safety issues of concern to our members.