

STATE OF KANSAS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



STATE CAPITOL
TOPEKA, KS 66612
(785) 296-7105
kevin.schwertfeger@house.ks.gov

DISTRICT ADDRESS
34918 W. SILVER LAKE RD.
TURON, KS 67583
(620) 497-6512
(620) 546-3461 (C)
ksforkansas@gmail.com

KEVIN D. SCHWERTFEGER
114TH DISTRICT

Proponent Testimony for HB2253

An ACT concerning crimes, punishment and criminal procedure; relating to theft of property; providing that the violation the theft of grain, livestock or implements of husbandry is a severity level 5, nonperson felony; allowing for the forfeiture of property used in the commission of theft of an implement of husbandry; amending K.S.A. 21-5801 and 22-4807a and repealing the existing sections.

I, Kevin Schwertfeger, on behalf of the citizens of the 114th House District, my three County Sheriffs, Campbell of Reno, White of Pratt, & Wood of Kingman co., The Honorable Representative Megan Steele my co-author, Kansas Feed and Grain Association, Kansas Livestock Association, Kansas Cattlemen's Association, & Kansas Farm Bureau stand in support of HB2253.

This Bill addresses strengthening Kansas law where it's needed. Current Kansas Ag law about theft is weak. It addresses cattle, grain and vehicle theft in minimal misdemeanor levels. My constituents are suffering from an ever increasing problem of theft. Under current law, a thief can take property that took the victim several years to pay for. That victim can not recover anything from their years of hard work and labor.

I can personally give you numerous stories of my friends and family who have been victims of criminals negatively impacting their lives and business'. I give you eight examples of recent theft : Rep. Siewert had a vehicle stolen and vandalism done, My brothers farm service truck was stolen with tools and diesel tank, It was found wrecked into an elderly couples car ironically near the Hutchinson Correctional Facility where the driver and passenger belonged. Geesling Farms had two pickups stolen, Dillon Farms had theft occur at the farm headquarters losing thousands in tools, Pleasantview Service were robbed of Stihl chainsaws, Preisser farms had a skid steer and a valued car taken, Glen Farms had valuable weaning calves stolen from cattle pens. My wife had her well cared for Ford F150 plus my trailer that I used to haul culverts and township supplies for Miami Twp was stolen. My brother Jeff Schwertfeger had his farm service pickup taken. It had every tool you ever needed on it, plus a full fuel tank of diesel. The thieves driving it blew through the intersection ironically near the Hutchinson Correctional Facility where they belonged. They collided with and elderly couple who survived but lost their car in the process.

In speaking with local Sheriffs there is a need to bring lower valued vehicle theft in as a felony. Currently it is regarded as a misdemeanor and because of that we see a revolving door effect with county jail time. The perps find this as a real money-making opportunity on the backs of hard working Kansans with no real consequences. I have been told by the Sheriffs that is why we continue to have this problem ongoing. Something must be done to stop all this vehicle theft, cattle and equipment plus grain theft.

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I ask you to support this bill to help the people I represent who are suffering.

Please help the people of Kansas by passing this bill.

Rep. Kevin Schwertfeger

KS 114 House District

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kevin Schwertfeger", is written over a horizontal line.