



OREGON HOUSE REPUBLICANS

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HOUSE REPUBLICANS ANNOUNCE PLAN TO COMBAT METAL THEFT IN 2009

SALEM— House Republicans announced today they will introduce legislation in 2009 to combat metal theft. The legislation will include several components, including stronger anti-theft laws and law enforcement tools, tougher sentencing, and more effective guidelines on how metal can be sold and transported.

“Metal theft is an escalating problem in Oregon that is costing businesses and taxpayers millions of dollars,” said Rep. Andy Olson (R-Albany), a co-sponsor of the legislation. “While we made progress in 2007, more work needs to be done to protect businesses, schools, public and private art and our infrastructure.”

The legislation will modify the existing statute of First Degree Theft to include any amount of metal stolen, better enabling district attorneys to prosecute and convict metal thieves. It would create a new crime of aggravated criminal mischief that carries a mandatory minimum sentence of 36 months.

“This legislation will send a strong message to those who steal and sell publicly- and privately-owned metals for a profit,” said Rep. Kim Thatcher (R-Keizer), a co-sponsor. “Our solution will force metal thieves to think twice before they steal from our farmers, small business owners, utilities and Oregon taxpayers.”

The House Republican plan will clarify purchasing guidelines to prohibit recyclers and scrap metal dealers from receiving any coated metal that had been melted, or wiring that had the coating burned off. Further, the legislation will direct district attorneys to develop county “action plans” with local law enforcement and local recyclers and scrap metal dealers.

“We can’t combat metal theft without a strong partnership of law enforcement officers and metal purchasers,” said Rep. Scott Bruun (R-West Linn), a co-sponsor. “Through local planning and coordination, purchasers can be alerted to thefts within 24 hours of an incident and law enforcement can take quick action to locate stolen property.”

The House Republican plan will also give law enforcement greater tools to catch thieves who are transporting stolen metal on Oregon’s roads. The legislation will require transporters to carry certification for the metal, as is currently required for livestock and agricultural products. It will also amend existing statutes to enable law enforcement to track and arrest suspected thieves.

“Our bill will cripple the metal theft industry by keeping the thieves off our roads and highways,” said Rep. Vic Gilliam (R-Molalla), a co-sponsor. “Thieves can’t sell stolen property when they can’t reach the dealers and recyclers.”

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