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SEN. JACQUE'S BILL TO STOP THIEVES ADVANCES

Assembly committee clears bill cracking down on organized retail crime

MADISON, WI... With violent “smash and grab” retail thefts on the rise, a state Assembly committee today in a 13-2 vote passed legislation to deter these criminals by making it easier for local authorities to levy felony theft charges against repeat offenders.

“Led by organized gangs that resell stolen goods, these brazen criminals repeatedly victimize our neighborhoods and terrorize business owners,” said State Sen. André Jacque (R-De Pere), Senate author of the measure. “This trouble leaves us with more violence in our communities, and higher retail prices in our stores.”

Sen. Jacque said the bill strengthens state law by:

- Allowing a prosecutor to aggregate the value of property stolen or received within a six-month period, codifying the 2019 Wisconsin Supreme Court Decision in *State v. Lopez*. Additionally, it would allow prosecutors to consolidate offenses committed in multiple counties into a single filing.
- Creating the necessary statutory language for the Department of Justice to award grants to consortia of district attorneys, law enforcement agencies, and counties for the purpose of forming task forces to improve response to, investigation of, and prosecution of organized retail theft crimes, vehicle and vehicle accessory thefts and cargo theft, with the intent of allocating dedicated funding for this purpose in the next biennial budget.

“These initiatives will help turn the tide against thieves traveling across state lines to engage in retail crime and other organized financial crimes, including identity theft and credit card fraud, choosing targets they think are more amenable to their activities,” Sen. Jacque said. “This bill is an important step to fighting back.”

Sen. Jacque said that earlier this session, he had also proposed lowering Wisconsin’s threshold for felony retail and conventional theft charges from \$2,500 – currently one of the highest in the country – to \$500, with a maximum sentence of three years that could be raised by 50 percent if the theft risked bodily harm.

“While I still support making these two changes, they are not incorporated into this proposal in the interest of enhancing retail theft prevention and prosecution with broad bi-partisan support yet this session,” Sen. Jacque said. “It’s urgent to give prosecutors a fuller array of charging options for what can be some very serious crimes.”

The measure ([Assembly Bill 928](#)) must next clear the full Assembly and Senate, and be signed by the Governor, to become law.

Senator André Jacque represents Northeast Wisconsin’s First Senate District, consisting of Door and Kewaunee Counties and portions of Brown, Calumet, Manitowoc, and Outagamie counties.