

HB 2737 -- AUTO THEFT PREVENTION

SPONSOR: Butz

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass" by the Special Committee on Public Policy by a vote of 7 to 0. Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Rules- Legislative Oversight by a vote of 9 to 0.

This bill establishes the "Auto Theft Prevention Commission", which is assigned to the Department of Public Safety, though the Director of Public Safety will have no supervision, authority, or control over the actions or decisions of the Commission. The Commission will have 11 members, including the Superintendent of the State Highway Patrol or his or her designee; the Attorney General or his or her designee; and various members to be appointed by the Governor, as specified in the bill. Some of the duties of the Commission include establishing a grant program for the provisions of funds to local law enforcement agencies and multi-jurisdiction task forces for: preventing, reducing, and investigating motor vehicle and motor vehicle parts theft; investigating fraud related to motor vehicle insurance, motor vehicle dealer purchases, and motor vehicle rental transactions; and purchasing equipment and technology for support in motor vehicle-related crime prevention, reduction, and investigation. The Commission will also provide support to local prosecutors handling motor vehicle and motor vehicle parts theft.

Any grant awarded under this section will be upon recommendation from and after consideration by the Commission. Each grant application must describe the type of motor vehicle-related crime prevention, reduction, investigation, enforcement, prosecution, or offender rehabilitation program to be implemented. The types of programs are described in the bill.

The Commission must submit an annual report the General Assembly and the Governor by December 1.

The bill creates the "Auto Theft Prevention Commission Revolving Fund", which will be used solely to implement the provisions related to the Commission. There will be \$5 added to the fee to register a motor vehicle or trailer, increasing the total fee to \$13. The additional \$5 will be transferred to the Fund.

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that this bill will help address the issue of auto theft. Several counties already have these programs and they have seen positive results. Vehicle theft in the State is at record levels; this bill will provide important resources for law enforcement to prevent vehicle theft.

Testifying in person for the bill were Representative Butz and National Insurance Crime Bureau.

OPPONENTS: Those who oppose the bill say that this bill introduces a fee, which in reality is another tax of \$5.

Testifying in person against the bill was Arnie C. "Honest-Abe" Dienoff-State Public Advocate.

Written testimony has been submitted for this bill. The full written testimony and witnesses testifying online can be found under Testimony on the bill page on the House website.