

Bolen's Public Policy Memo

The rise of car theft in Washington State is a public problem that can not only destroy the lives of those individuals who have had their cars stolen, but also negatively impacts society as a whole. Washington State currently ranks third in the entire country for car theft and only shows alarming signs of growth. While this issue has hit Pierce and King counties especially hard, they are far from the only counties affected. Car theft can affect anyone, but certain vehicles are more likely to be targeted due to the older, poor anti-theft measures by the manufacturer. Many of the vehicles most likely to be stolen are older. Thus, those most affected by car theft are often people and families experiencing poverty who cannot afford to replace the vehicle. The consequences of car theft are not limited to the individual whose car has been stolen. The impact of these car thefts includes the entire community as stolen vehicles are often used to commit other crimes, such as robbery or drug trafficking. Moreover, car theft can result in higher insurance premiums for all car owners, which can be especially burdensome for people living in poverty.

Considering the individual, social, and economic impact, public and legislative attention is required. The state legislature should take action by increasing funding to increase public transportation which would lessen the need for vehicles and reduce carbon dioxide emissions. Additionally, providing funding for increased implementation of community watch programs could help reduce theft.

Washington State must take action to address the severity of the increasing car theft problem. The consequences of inaction will only worsen the problem and harm individuals, families, and communities throughout the state.