

Senate Judiciary Committee Hearing on SB11

10:30 a.m Tuesday, Jan. 20, 2015

Proponent Testimony by Capt. Gavin Seiler, Wichita Police Department

Chairman King and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

The City of Wichita supports Senate Bill 11, believing that this legislation is needed to prevent victimization, promote consistency in regulation throughout the state and to assist all law enforcement agencies in addressing rampant metal theft.

Over the past decade, Wichita has experienced a huge increase in scrap metal theft with much of it occurring in the aircraft and utility industries. The theft of metal has reached epidemic proportions driven by extremely high prices in all metals.

No community in Kansas is immune from the theft of metal. While Wichita regulates scrap metal processors, there are unregulated businesses just outside our jurisdiction, where there is no accountability for the metal purchased, sold, or traded.

Currently, thieves are targeting copper in abandoned warehouses, occupied buildings, utility lines and from air conditioning units. The loss in this type of theft is extensive, requiring thousands of dollars in repair for the small value in copper or aluminum that is taken. The vast majority of these thieves are addicted to methamphetamine or crack cocaine, and have no concern about the future or the damage caused by their criminal acts. Their concern is only how they can obtain their next high.

This legislation makes important inroads to gaining consistency of regulation throughout the state and is very important in law enforcement efforts to track metal transactions.

Dealers have stressed the need for consistency throughout the entire state. This bill promotes the desired consistency sought by all stakeholders throughout the state, allowing all dealers to be on a level playing field with others while meeting the needs of law enforcement.

Senate Bill 11 is an important first step towards a solution. Criminals will always find a method to continue their agenda. But this legislation can make a huge difference in protecting the public from this growing threat.