

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STAFF ANALYSIS

BILL #: HB 713 Theft Offenses
SPONSOR(S): Donalds
TIED BILLS: **IDEN./SIM. BILLS:** SB 928

REFERENCE	ACTION	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR or BUDGET/POLICY CHIEF
1) Criminal Justice Subcommittee		Painter	Sumner
2) Justice Appropriations Subcommittee			
3) Judiciary Committee			

SUMMARY ANALYSIS

A person commits theft if he or she knowingly obtains or uses, or endeavors to obtain or use, the property of another with intent to, either temporarily or permanently:

- Deprive the other person of a right to the property or a benefit from the property; or
- Appropriate the property to his or her own use or to the use of any person not entitled to the use of the property.

A person commits retail theft when he or she does any of the following with the intent to deprive a merchant of possession, use, benefit, or full retail value of property:

- The taking possession of or carrying away of merchandise, property, money or negotiable documents;
- Altering or removing a label, universal product code, or price tag;
- Transferring merchandise from one container to another; or
- Removing a shopping cart, with intent to deprive the merchant of possession, use, benefit, or full retail value.

Thefts are categorized as misdemeanors or felonies under s. 812.014, F.S. Whether a theft is a misdemeanor or a felony generally depends upon the value of the property taken by the offender, the offender's history of theft convictions or, in some cases, the type of property taken. Retail theft is punishable as a third degree felony under s. 812.015, F.S., if the property value is over \$300, but can be enhanced to a second degree felony if the offender has a prior retail theft conviction.

HB 713 amends s. 812.014, F.S. and s. 812.015, F.S., by increasing the minimum threshold values for the following property theft crimes:

- Petit theft is increased from \$100 or more to \$500 or more;
- First degree petit theft is increased from \$100 or more, but less than \$300, to \$500 or more, but less than \$1,500;
- Third degree grand theft is increased from \$300 or more to \$1,500 or more;
- Third degree grand theft from a dwelling or its unenclosed curtilage is increased from \$100 or more, but less than \$300, to \$1,500 or more, but less than \$5,000; and
- Third degree felony retail theft is increased from \$300 or more to \$1,500 or more.

The bill also deletes several items from the list of property which, if stolen, is third degree grand theft and is punishable as a third degree felony. Finally, the bill amends the enhancement of the theft and retail theft statutes.

The Criminal Justice Impact Conference (CJIC) considered a similar bill, SB 928, on January 8, 2018, and determined that the bill will reduce the need for prison beds by more than 25 beds.

The bill provides an effective date of July 1, 2018.

This document does not reflect the intent or official position of the bill sponsor or House of Representatives.

STORAGE NAME: h0713.CRJ

DATE: 1/8/2018

FULL ANALYSIS
I. SUBSTANTIVE ANALYSIS

A. EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES:

Background

Property Theft

A person commits theft if he or she knowingly obtains or uses, or endeavors to obtain or use, the property of another with intent to, either temporarily or permanently:

- Deprive the other person of a right to the property or a benefit from the property¹; or
- Appropriate the property to his or her own use or to the use of any person not entitled to the use of the property.²

Section 812.014, F.S., defines and categorizes thefts into misdemeanor or felony criminal violations. Whether a theft is a misdemeanor or a felony generally depends upon the value of the property taken by the offender, the offender's history of theft convictions or, in some cases, the type of property taken. Offense levels for theft crimes based on property value thresholds are classified as follows:

	Property Value	Offense Level
Grand Theft	≥ \$100,000	First Degree Felony ³
	≥ \$20,000, but < \$100,000	Second Degree Felony ⁴
	≥ \$10,000, but < \$20,000	Third Degree Felony ⁵
	≥ \$5,000, but < \$10,000	Third Degree Felony
	≥ \$300, but < \$5,000	Third Degree Felony
	≥ \$100, but < \$300 if taken from a dwelling or unenclosed curtilage of a dwelling	Third Degree Felony
Petit Theft	≥ \$100, but < \$300	First Degree Misdemeanor ⁶
	< \$100	Second Degree Misdemeanor ⁷

Additionally, s. 812.014, F.S., increases the severity of a petit theft offense if a person has one or more prior convictions. Specifically:

- A person who has previously been convicted of any theft, who commits petit theft, commits a first degree misdemeanor.⁸
- A person who has been previously convicted of theft two or more times, who commits a petit theft, commits a third degree felony.⁹

¹ S. 812.014(1)(a), F.S.

² S. 812.014(1)(b), F.S.

³ A first degree felony is punishable by up to 30 years imprisonment and a \$100,000 fine. SS. 775.082(3)(b)1 and 775.083(1)(b), F.S.

⁴ A second degree felony is punishable by up to 15 years imprisonment and a \$10,000 fine. SS. 775.082(3)(d) and 775.083(1)(b), F.S.

⁵ A third degree felony is punishable by up to five years imprisonment and a \$5,000 fine. SS. 775.082(3)(e) and 775.083(1)(c), F.S.

⁶ A first degree misdemeanor is punishable by up to one year in county jail and a \$1,000 fine. SS. 775.082(4)(a) and 775.083(1)(d), F.S.

⁷ A second degree misdemeanor is punishable by up to 60 days in county jail and a \$500 fine. SS. 775.082(4)(b) and 775.083(1)(e), F.S.

⁸ S. 812.014(3)(b), F.S.

⁹ S. 812.014(3)(c), F.S.

Florida last increased the minimum threshold property value for third degree grand theft in 1986.¹⁰ The third degree grand theft provisions related to property taken from a dwelling or its unenclosed curtilage were added in 1996.¹¹ The petit theft provisions were amended, including the thresholds, in 1996.¹²

Retail Theft

A person commits retail theft when he or she does any of the following with the intent to deprive a merchant of possession, use, benefit, or full retail value of property:

- The taking possession of or carrying away of merchandise, property, money or negotiable documents;
- Altering or removing a label, universal product code, or price tag;
- Transferring merchandise from one container to another; or
- Removing a shopping cart, with intent to deprive the merchant of possession, use, benefit, or full retail value.¹³

Retail theft is a third degree felony, if the property stolen is valued at \$300 or more, and the person:

- Individually, or with one or more other persons, coordinates the activities of one or more individuals in committing the offense, in which case the amount of each individual theft is aggregated to determine the value of the property stolen;
- Commits theft from more than one location within a 48-hour period, in which case the amount of each individual theft is aggregated to determine the value of the property stolen;
- Acts in concert with one or more other individuals within one or more establishments to distract the merchant, merchant's employee, or law enforcement officer in order to carry out the offense, or acts in other ways to coordinate efforts to carry out the offense; or
- Commits the offense through the purchase of merchandise in a package or box that contains merchandise other than, or in addition to, the merchandise purported to be contained in the package or box.

Retail theft is a second degree felony when:

- A person has previously been convicted of third degree felony retail theft; or
- Individually, or in concert with one or more other persons, coordinates the activities of one or more persons in committing the offense of retail theft where the stolen property has a value in excess of \$3,000.¹⁴

The thresholds for third degree felony retail theft were created in 2001.¹⁵

Inmate and Probation Population in Florida for Theft Crimes

There are approximately 7,000 people in Florida prisons for theft crime.¹⁶ Of these 7,000 inmates:

- 603 are incarcerated for petit theft enhanced due to two or more prior theft convictions;
- 53 are incarcerated for retail theft of \$300 or more; and
- 1,136 are incarcerated for grand theft of \$300 or more but less than \$5,000.¹⁷

There are approximately 47,000 people on probation with the Florida Department of Corrections for theft crime.¹⁸ Out of those 47,000 individuals:

- 1,393 are on probation for petit thefts enhanced due to prior theft convictions;

¹⁰ Ch. 86-161, s. 1, L.O.F.

¹¹ Ch. 96-388, s. 49, L.O.F.

¹² Ch. 96-388, s. 49, L.O.F.

¹³ S. 812.015(1)(d), F.S.

¹⁴ S. 812.015(9), F.S.

¹⁵ Ch. 2001-115, s. 6, L.O.F.

¹⁶ Email from Florida Department of Corrections, December 18, 2017 (on file with Criminal Justice Subcommittee).

¹⁷ Id. For inmate populations as of December 15, 2017.

¹⁸ Supra, FN 17.

- 195 are on probation for retail theft of \$300 or more; and
- 13,895 are on probation for grand theft of \$300 or more but less than \$5,000.¹⁹

Theft Thresholds in Other States

Since 2000, 37 states have increased the threshold dollar amounts for felony theft crimes.²⁰

Year of Change	State	Previous threshold	Enacted threshold
2001	Oklahoma	\$50	\$500
2002	Missouri	\$150	\$500
2003	Alabama	\$250	\$500
	Mississippi	\$250	\$500
2004	Kansas	\$500	\$1,000
	Wyoming	\$500	\$1,000
2005	South Dakota	\$500	\$1,000
2006	Arizona	\$250	\$1,000
	New Mexico	\$250	\$500
	Vermont	\$500	\$900
2007	Colorado	\$500	\$1,000
	Minnesota	\$500	\$1,000
2009	Connecticut	\$1,000	\$2,000
	Delaware	\$1,000	\$1,500
	Kentucky	\$300	\$500
	Louisiana	\$300	\$500
	Maryland	\$500	\$1,000
	Montana	\$1,000	\$1,500
	Oregon	\$750	\$1,000
	Washington	\$250	\$750
2010	California	\$400	\$950
	Illinois	\$300	\$500
	New Hampshire	\$500	\$1,000
	South Carolina	\$1,000	\$2,000
	Utah	\$1,000	\$1,500
2011	Arkansas	\$500	\$1,000
	Nevada	\$250	\$650
	Ohio	\$500	\$1,000
2012	Georgia	\$500	\$1,500
	Rhode Island	\$500	\$1,500
2013	Colorado	\$1,000	\$2,000
	Indiana	Any amount	\$750
	North Dakota	\$500	\$1,000
2014	Alaska	\$500	\$750
	Louisiana	\$500	\$750
	Mississippi	\$500	\$1,000
2015	Alabama	\$500	\$1,500
	Nebraska	\$500	\$1,500

¹⁹ Supra, FN 17.

²⁰ Pew Charitable Trusts, *The Effects of Changing State Theft Penalties* (February 2016), available at http://www.pewtrusts.org/~media/assets/2016/02/the_effects_of_changing_state_theft_penalties.pdf?la=en (last visited January 4, 2018).

	Texas	\$1,500	\$2,500
2016	Alaska	\$750	\$1,000
	Hawaii	\$300	\$750
	Kansas	\$1,000	\$1,500
	Maryland	\$1,000	\$1,500
	Oklahoma	\$500	\$1,000
	Tennessee	\$500	\$1,000

The majority of states (30) and the District of Columbia set a \$1,000-or-greater property value threshold for felony grand theft. Fifteen states have thresholds between \$500 and \$950, and five states, including Florida, have thresholds below \$500.²¹

Value Threshold	States	Total Number
\$200	NJ, VA	2
\$250	MA	1
\$300	FL	1
\$500	IL, KY, NM	3
\$650	NV	1
\$750	IN, HI, LA, MO, WA	5
\$900	VT	1
\$950	CA	1
\$1,000	AK, AZ, AR, DC, ID, IA, ME, MI, MN, MS, NH, NY, NC, ND, OH, OK, OR, SD, TN, WV, WY	21
\$1,500	AL, DE, GA, KS, MD, MT, NE, RI, UT	9
\$2,000	CO, CT, PA, SC	4
\$2,500	TX, WI	2

Opponents of raising the felony theft threshold argue that increasing the threshold will incentivize offenders to steal higher value amounts.²² A study by the Pew Charitable Trusts evaluated 23 states that changed felony theft thresholds between 2001 and 2011 and found:

- Raising the felony theft threshold had no impact on the states' overall property crime or larceny rates.
- States that increased thresholds reported roughly the same average decrease in crime as the 27 states that did not.
- The amount of a state's felony theft threshold was not correlated with the state's property crime and larceny rates.²³

²¹ Id.

²² Lauren Krisai, *Stuck in the 80s: Time for Reform of Florida's Felony Theft Threshold*, The Journal of the James Madison Institute, Spring 2017, http://reason.org/files/florida_theft_threshold_stuck_in_1980s.pdf (last visited January 6, 2018).

²³ Supra, FN 20.

Effect of the Proposed Changes

Property Theft

The bill amends the following property theft provisions in s. 812.014, F.S., to increase the values that are the basis for the punishment for the offenses:

Offense	Current Threshold	Proposed Threshold
Second degree petit theft	< \$100	< \$500
First degree petit theft	≥ \$100, but < \$300	≥ \$500, but < \$1,500 ²⁴
Third degree grand theft	≥ \$300, but < \$20,000	≥ \$1,500, but < \$20,000 ²⁵
Third degree grand theft of property from a dwelling or its enclosed curtilage	≥ \$100, but < \$300	≥ \$1,500, but < \$5,000 ²⁶

The bill also deletes the following items from the list of property which, if stolen, is a third degree grand theft and is punishable as a third degree felony:

- A will, codicil, or other testamentary instrument;
- Any fire extinguisher;
- Any property taken from a designated construction site identified by the posting of a sign as provided for in s. 810.09(2)(d);
- Any stop sign; and
- Anhydrous ammonia²⁷

While it is still a crime to steal these items, the offense level of the crime will be based on the property value rather than automatically qualifying as a third degree grand theft.

The bill also amends the enhancement of the statute. Petit theft becomes a third-degree felony only if:

- The offender has two or more prior theft convictions as an adult; and
- The most recent subsequent petit theft offense occurred within three years of the expiration of the offender's most recent theft conviction.

Retail Theft

The bill amends s. 812.015, F.S., to increase the property value of third degree felony retail theft from \$300 or more, to \$1,500 or more.²⁸ The bill enhances retail theft to a second degree felony only if:

- The offender has previously been convicted of retail theft as an adult; and
- The subsequent retail theft offense occurred within three years of the expiration of the offender's most recent retail theft conviction.

²⁴ According to the CPI Inflation Calculator of the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics, \$100 in 1996 has the same buying power as \$159.76 in 2017 dollars and \$300 in 1996 has the same buying power as \$479.28 in 2017 dollars. Available at: <https://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/cpicalc.pl> (last visited January 7, 2018).

²⁵ According to the CPI Inflation Calculator of the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics, \$300 in 1986 has the same buying power as \$675.19 in 2017 dollars. Available at: <https://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/cpicalc.pl> (last visited January 7, 2018).

²⁶ Supra, FN 24.

²⁷ Anhydrous ammonia is a colorless gas used as an agricultural fertilizer and industrial refrigerant, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/healthcommunication/toolstemplates/entertainmented/tips/AnhydrousAmmonia.html> (last visited January 6, 2018).

²⁸ According to the CPI Inflation Calculator of the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics, \$300 in 2001 has the same buying power as \$422.62 in 2017 dollars. Available at: <https://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/cpicalc.pl> (last visited January 7, 2018).

Other

Lastly, the bill amends s. 921.0022, F.S., to conform the Criminal Punishment Code offense severity ranking chart to changes made by the bill.

The bill provides an effective date of July 1, 2018.

B. SECTION DIRECTORY:

Section 1: Amends 812.014, F.S., relating to theft.

Section 2: Amends 812.015, F.S., relating to retail theft and farm theft; transit fare evasion; mandatory fine; alternative punishment; detention and arrest; exemption from liability for false arrest; resisting arrest; and penalties.

Section 3: Amends 921.0022, F.S., relating to Criminal Punishment Code; offense severity ranking chart.

Section 4: Provides an effective date of July 1, 2018.

II. FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE GOVERNMENT:

1. Revenues:

None.

2. Expenditures:

The Criminal Justice Impact Conference (CJIC) considered a similar bill, SB 928, on January 8, 2018. The CJIC determined that the bill's increase of property theft thresholds will reduce the need for prison beds by more than 25 beds. The bill's increase of retail theft thresholds will reduce the need for prison beds by an unquantifiable amount.

The CJIC determined that cumulatively the bill's amendments to all sections of law will have a negative significant impact on prison beds, meaning that the bill will overall reduce the need for prison beds by more than 25 beds.²⁹

B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:

1. Revenues:

None.

2. Expenditures:

None.

C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR:

None.

²⁹ Email from the Office of Economic & Demographic Research, January 5, 2018 (on file with Criminal Justice Subcommittee).

D. FISCAL COMMENTS:

None.

III. COMMENTS

A. CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES:

1. Applicability of Municipality/County Mandates Provision:

The bill appears to be exempt from the requirements of Article VII, Section 18 of the Florida Constitution because it is a criminal law.

2. Other:

None.

B. RULE-MAKING AUTHORITY:

Not applicable.

C. DRAFTING ISSUES OR OTHER COMMENTS:

None.

IV. AMENDMENTS/ COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE CHANGES