

Testimony SB 2242
House Transportation Committee
March 11, 2021

Mr. Chairman and members of the House Transportation Committee, my name is Molly Barnes and I am Vice President & Equipment Manager at Northern Improvement Company. Northern Improvement is a highway, heavy & municipal construction company with North Dakota offices in Fargo, Bismarck, and Dickinson. We have been in business since 1935 and are one of the founding members of the AGC of ND when it formed in 1951.

I appreciate the opportunity to testify today and we support SB 2242. We appreciate SB 2242 being introduced and the thoughtful consideration of this issue, which is a very serious one.

This type of theft has been an increasing issue with our business. On several occasions at our various locations across the state, we have been the victim of theft. Our Fargo location has a fenced in yard, yet in the last two years, we have had 5 catalytic converters stolen off pickups. Our Bismarck location has had 11 catalytic converters stolen in the last two years. New catalytic converters range from \$300 to \$1600 installed. If we average that, we get \$950. $\$950 \times 16$ catalytic converter is over \$15,000. These are just the cost to install the converter. This does not include the labor cost to shuffle the vehicles to and from the dealership. Nor does it account for downtime waiting for the parts and being without the vehicle.

I understand the scrap price is roughly one third to half the price of new. Why is the price so high you may ask? Platinum, Palladium and Rhodium. Platinum value is \$1113.05 per oz. Palladium is \$2387.50 per oz and Rhodium is \$19,260 per oz. Compare these metals to copper at \$0.23 per oz. For the thieves that stole from us, that is up to a \$7500 payday. There is a YouTube video that shows two thieves jacking up a car and stealing the converter in 60 seconds! There was a news article on KFYP on March 9, 2021 where a couple was arrested for stolen catalytic converters. The girl had sold over 50 of them in two months. The male had admitted to stealing the converters. This problem will not be fixed unless there are checks and balances within the used parts industry.

Thanks for the opportunity to comment on SB 2242. We offer our support to this legislation and request the House Transportation committee issue a Do Pass Recommendation. If you have any questions, I would be pleased to attempt to address them.

Two charged in catalytic converter thefts

TWO CHARGED IN CATALYTIC CONVERTER THEFTS MERCER COUNTY

- JOSHUA WESTPHAL & JENNIFER BANNISTER
- STOLE MULTIPLE CATALYTIC CONVERTERS
- DRUGS AND OTHER STOLEN ITEMS FOUND IN HOME

Catalytic converter thefts (KFYR)

By Julie Martin

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BISMARCK, N.D. (KFYR) - The Mercer County Sheriff's Department charged two suspects after two months of investigating the theft of catalytic converters.

Deputies took a report in January after two catalytic converters, and a set of rims were stolen from a property in rural Mercer County.

In February, the Sheriff's Office deployed a decoy car with identification marks on the converter.

Deputies say the converter was stolen and sold to a Mandan scrap dealer by Jennifer Bannister.

When deputies executed a search warrant of Bannister's home, several drug paraphernalia items and drugs were located.

During a search of the property, another suspect, Joshua Westphal, admitted to stealing multiple items from Morton County valued at \$7,500 along with multiple catalytic converters.

According to the affidavit, Bannister has sold over 50 catalytic converters in two months, but denied knowing they were stolen.

Bannister is charged with accomplice to theft, theft, possession of a controlled substance, and two counts of unlawful possession of drug paraphernalia.

Westphal is charged with three counts of theft, two counts of unlawful possession of drug paraphernalia, possession of a controlled substance, and criminal mischief.

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