



# North Dakota House of Representatives

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## Representative Matthew Ruby

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## COMMITTEES:

Human Services (Chair)  
Energy and Natural Resources

19MAR25

Good afternoon, Chairman Barta and Committee,

My name is Matt Ruby and I represent District 40 in Minot. I brought HB 1528 which deals with an issue that law enforcement is having with bringing criminal charges for certain situations involving arson. Current law doesn't consider joint property that is damaged by one of the parties, the property of another. Another situation is when someone burns their own property that they have a joint stake in with another party, but it wasn't done for an insurance claim.

**March 2022 Harvey** Abusive husband attempted to burn up his home after a domestic dispute with his wife, who law enforcement escorted from their joint residence. 15 minutes later the husband started the house on fire, specifically their bed and the couch his wife had been sleeping on. The fire(s) did extensive damage, but burned themselves mostly out. Home had a mortgage against it, but owners let the insurance expire. Is joint property (a home) property of another. The prosecutor/court did not think so.

**September 2022 Surrey** Adult child burned up residence, with fire(s) started in multiple areas. Home was in his name and parents' name. Parents carried the insurance only in their name and made an insurance claim. No prosecution because the house was not burned for an insurance claim.

**January 2024 Rugby** Domestic Altercation between husband and wife. Husband burned up his and wife's car on video, which was the car his wife always drove. There was no insurance on the car. No prosecution because of joint property and no insurance claim (or because he started the fire for purposes other than collecting insurance.)

**September 2024 Jamestown** Wife left the husband, and they are living apart. The husband torches the house and garage with her new pickup in it, which was in both their names. The wife made an insurance claim. No charges related to burning up joint property as a result of separation, and the husband burning the property was not for the intent of HIM collecting insurance.

We have a couple situations that this bill hopes to address. I had the Attorney General's office help with drafting. I would be happy to stand for any questions.