

**SENATE BILL REPORT**

**SSB 5438**

**AS PASSED SENATE, FEBRUARY 11, 1992**

**Brief Description:** Increasing stolen property values for determining degrees of theft.

**SPONSORS:** Senate Committee on Law & Justice (originally sponsored by Senators Nelson, Owen, Talmadge and Moore).

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON LAW & JUSTICE**

**Majority Report:** That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5438 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Nelson, Chairman; Erwin, Hayner, L. Kreidler, Madsen, and Rasmussen.

**Staff:** Jack Brummel (786-7428)

**Hearing Dates:** February 13, 1991; February 22, 1991

**BACKGROUND:**

According to the Office of the Administrator for the Courts, some theft and possession of stolen property cases are not being prosecuted because inflation has diminished the real value of the dollar limitations and prosecutors do not believe it is worth their while to prosecute. Theft of an item which resulted in a light sentence five years ago can now mean substantial time under incarceration because of the inflated value of the item.

**SUMMARY:**

The dollar limitations are raised for second and third degree theft, and possession of stolen property in the second, and third degree. Property or services with a value that is difficult to ascertain shall be deemed to be worth less than \$1,000.

**Appropriation:** none

**Revenue:** none

**Fiscal Note:** none requested

**TESTIMONY FOR:**

This bill will plug some holes in the system. Prosecutors are not filing charges because the dollar amount of some stolen goods doesn't justify felony convictions.

**TESTIMONY AGAINST:**

Prosecutors in smaller counties will charge cases at the \$250 limit because their volume of case is not as high as in King and Pierce Counties.

**TESTIFIED:** Melanie Stewart, District Court Judges Assoc. (pro):  
Pat Cooper, Washington Assoc. of Prosecuting Attorneys (con)