
IMPROVE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF MOTOR VEHICLE THEFT PREVENTION PROGRAMS IN TEXAS

LBB RECOMMENDATIONS

1 Amend statute to require ABTPA to include standard measures for all grants, allocate grant funds across all program categories, and ensure grants are used to increase the recovery rate of stolen vehicles, clearance rate of vehicle thefts, and number of persons arrested for vehicle theft.

2 Amend statute to require ABTPA to distribute funds based on motor vehicle theft rates rather than geographic distribution.

3 Amend statute to require ABTPA to update their plan of operation biannually.

4 Amend statute to authorize, rather than require, the H.E.A.T. Program.

5 Include a rider requiring DPS to apply for Federal Funds to administer BATIC.

Recommendations 1, 2, 3, and 4 require statutory change. The introduced 2012–13 General Appropriations Bill includes a rider implementing Recommendation 5.

These recommendations would not have a fiscal impact for the 2012–13 biennium. They would improve the operation and measure the future performance of state programs addressing motor vehicle theft.

The Automobile Burglary and Theft Prevention Authority (ABTPA) at the Texas Department of Motor Vehicles and the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) are involved in activities to prevent motor vehicle theft and recover stolen vehicles. Since these activities began, the rate of motor vehicle theft in Texas has decreased. However, no data conclusively indicates this decline can be attributed to the efforts of state programs.

The percentage of stolen vehicles recovered, motor vehicle thefts cleared, and number of persons arrested for motor vehicle theft in Texas has decreased, rather than increased, since 1999. Texas appropriates almost twice as much to auto theft prevention authority activities as any other state, yet is ranked second nationwide for total vehicle thefts and ninth for vehicles stolen per 100,000 residents. No standard criteria is used to measure the effectiveness of ABTPA grant programs, and the Help End Auto Theft Program (H.E.A.T.) and Texas Recovery and Identification Program do not collect information to determine if vehicles in these programs are stolen or recovered. The Border Auto Theft Information Center (BATIC), which is fully funded by Texas, has recovered more vehicles registered in California than registered in Texas and 68 percent of vehicles recovered through BATIC since 2004 have been registered outside of Texas.

Although the introduced 2012–13 General Appropriations Bill does not include appropriations for ABTPA, appropriations may be restored in future biennia. Therefore, implementing these recommendations would improve the ability of these programs to increase the recovery rate of stolen vehicles and enable the state to assess the effectiveness of its motor vehicle theft and recovery programs.

The full text of this report can be found in the *Government Effectiveness and Efficiency* report (Legislative Budget Board, January 2011), page 429.