

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- A bipartisan effort in both the Senate and the House, seeks to crack down on scrap metal theft.

Rep. Bart Stupak, D-Menominee, was joined by Rep. Lee Terry, R-Neb., senators Amy Klobuchar, D-Minn., and Orrin Hatch, D-Utah, in introducing the Metal Theft Prevention Act, H.R. 1006/S. 148, into the current congressional session.

The law, if passed, would help law enforcement agencies catch metal thieves by requiring more stringent records be kept by scrap metal yards. Specifically, the act would require scrap metal dealers to document their metal transactions and prohibit cash transactions of more than \$75. Scrap metal dealers would face civil penalties of up to \$10,000 for failing to document transactions.

Although similar action was taken up by Michigan's legislature in Lansing last year, Stupak said that it was not enough.

"Many states, including Michigan, have passed laws in an effort to curtail metal theft. But a patchwork of state laws is not doing enough to help investigators prevent and solve these crimes."

Locally, law enforcement officials agreed that theft of scrap metal was on the rise and that more regulations would help them track down those are profiting illegally from it.

"It's a big problem everywhere. It's big business," said Emmet County Sheriff Pete Wallin. "Anything would help us. It would be easier to track who is trading this stuff in."

Charlevoix County Sheriff Don Schneider added that a reputable business had nothing to fear from being held more accountable.

"If we work together, this shouldn't be a problem," he said.

Warren Solgot, who operates a scrap metal business in East Jordan, said he rarely deals in cash and already keeps extensive records of his purchases and sales. He added that theft has dropped off considerably since the price of scrap metal has also fallen.

"It's to the point where even the thieves are complaining about the prices," he said. "When scrap comes in we itemize it, and if we have anything suspicious we take down the seller's license plate and their driver's license. We're trying to curb it as much as we can."

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