



## Stop Auto Thefts – Support the ABTPA

In 1991, the Texas Legislature created the Texas Automobile Burglary and Theft Prevention Authority (ABTPA) to help combat auto theft and burglary throughout the state. Every Texan who has auto insurance has helped pay for the operation of the ABTPA through a \$1 surcharge on every auto insurance policy sold in Texas. That surcharge is the sole funding source for the ABTPA and it is returned to Texans in the form of grants to law enforcement agencies to help combat auto theft and burglary.

Law enforcement officials tell us that most auto thefts are not the work of one-time thieves or joy riders, but professional criminals who seek specific vehicles and carry out this criminal act as often as possible until they are apprehended and placed behind bars. In 2009 alone, the cost of auto theft and burglary totaled approximately \$1 billion. It takes experienced law enforcement officers to stop these people.

Since its inception, the ABTPA has been instrumental in helping to reduce auto theft rates in Texas by more than 50 percent. Despite the success of the program, the current proposed state budget would abolish the agency but continue collection of the surcharge on auto policies. The funds would no longer go toward stopping auto thefts, but would instead go into the state's General Revenue Fund where it would be used for purposes other than preventing crime.

The ABTPA has built an effective statewide network of law enforcement groups and prosecutors to combat auto theft and burglary. It has established initiatives along the Texas-Mexico border to interdict the number of stolen vehicles headed into Mexico and assist in the recovery of stolen vehicles that have been taken across the border.

“In its first year of operation, the ABTPA funded six auto crime prevention task forces around the state. Today, it supports over 200 law enforcement officers all across Texas working to reduce vehicle thefts and vehicle burglaries,” noted Joe Wehrle, president and chief executive officer of the National Insurance Crime Bureau. “Cutting the ABTPA's funding would have a devastating effect on law enforcement across the state and there is a good possibility that the resultant economic harm from resurgent vehicle theft, burglaries and related crimes will far outweigh any short-term budget savings,” Wehrle said.

The Association of Fire and Casualty Companies in Texas (AFACT) and other state and national insurance groups have supported the ABTPA because there is and always will be a problem with auto thefts and burglaries. With less funding for law enforcement initiatives, Texans could see more auto thefts and burglaries in their communities. This will lead to increased pressure on auto insurance rates for Texans.

We encourage Texas lawmakers to support and fully fund the ABTPA so that auto insurance rates and ultimately Texas drivers can benefit from this crime fighting agency.

Craig Sparks

President

Association of Fire and Casualty Companies in Texas