

## Senator Thomas Chittenden Comments on S.48

Since 2019, catalytic converter theft has risen 1,215% according to the National Insurance Crime Bureau<sup>1</sup>. According to the largest Auto insurer in the US, claims for stolen catalytic converters doubled in the year ending June 2022 with a total of 43,200 stolen converters that year.

Here in Vermont and in this state house, every time this bill has come up in conversation, somebody has either had their Catalytic Converter stolen or had a loved one had it happen to them. These devices, attached our mufflers, are being hacked off of cars sitting in parking lots to be sold for scrap metal. Based on testimony, hacked off used catalytic converters can be redeemed at metal scrapyards for amounts ranging from \$200 to \$900 depending on the composition of the materials used. But it costs thousands of dollars to have a new one installed – and once a catalytic converter is ‘hacked off’ it can’t economically be reattached.

This is a growing problem that this bill attempts to address in two ways. First, this bill makes it just a little bit harder for a person (with the exception of motor vehicle recyclers or motor vehicle repair shops) to sell more than one detached/used catalytic converter to a scrap metal processor. This bill also changes our current law from **requesting** available documentation from the seller to now **requiring** third party documentation be collected at time of sale that establishes the seller lawfully owns the items to be sold.

That is how the bill started and that alone will make it just a little bit harder for stolen catalytic converters to be sold in the after market here in Vermont. But the biggest criticism of this bill as introduced was that it didn’t do enough to address the problem. To explore this issue further, your Committee on Transportation reached out to the New England State Police Information Network for additional perspective.

From testimony by the NESPIN Executive Director and his affiliates, we heard what neighboring states have recently done addressing this problem. Just last year Maine and Massachusetts passed new laws on catalytic converter thefts – going much further than what this bill does with required engravings, point of sale systems and mandatory centralized tracking of all catalytic converter sales. That testimony inspired our committee to add a tool to this bill inspired on what we hear Connecticut is considering this year and part of what Maine did.

Our amendment to this bill adds a requirement that any person (again excluding motor vehicle recyclers or motor vehicle repair shops) transporting more than one detached/used catalytic converter must have those catalytic converters permanently marked with the VIN of the vehicle they were last attached to and that the person transporting the detached catalytic converters must now have in their possession proof of lawful ownership of these devices. This is structured just as a legal requirement with a civil penalty (rather than a criminal offense). The intent of this additional language is to give law enforcement a tool if they pull somebody over with detached used catalytic converters in the back of their truck or car. This bill isn’t going stop the theft of catalytic converters but it is a step in the right direction. And with our neighbors is inspiring conversations at the federal level for new car sales and parts sales to serialize catalytic converters to make it even harder to sell stolen devices in the aftermarket.

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<sup>1</sup> [How to protect your car from catalytic converter theft, and what to do if it happens](#). November 4, 2022 5:00 AM. Becky Sullivan