



## BETTER JUSTICE FOR FLORIDA // SUPPORT SB 928 & HB 713

# Raise the Monetary Value for Felony Theft Offenses

In Florida, a person can be charged with third-degree, felony grand theft if he or she steals something valued at \$300 or more. That's the third-lowest monetary threshold in the country and the lowest in the South. The current felony threshold is so low that someone can be convicted of a felony and spend up to five years in prison for stealing a bicycle, a lawn mower or a used cell phone. It's time for the Sunshine State to do what's fair and just for Floridians by updating this antiquated law for the 21st century.

### THE PROBLEM

#### Florida's monetary threshold is outdated

- The current \$300 threshold for felony grand theft value has not been adjusted – even for inflation – since 1986.
- A majority of states have already updated their monetary thresholds. For instance, Louisiana raised its threshold from \$500 to \$750 in 2014, and to \$1,000 in 2017.
- The average felony threshold among all states and Washington, D.C. is roughly \$1,100. Among southern states, the average is over \$1,400.

#### People are going to prison for low-level theft, resulting in life-long consequences

- A grand theft felony charge could result in a prison sentence of up to five years and a fine of up to \$5,000. The punishment does not fit the crime.
- A felony conviction can brand a person for life and create barriers to finding employment, housing and education.
- People convicted of a felony in Florida are stripped of many civil rights for life, including the fundamental right to vote.

#### Incarcerating people for low-value theft crimes is expensive and ineffective

- It costs nearly \$20,000 a year to house someone in a Florida prison.<sup>1</sup> It is not in taxpayers' interest to spend as much as \$100,000 over five years to punish an individual for stealing \$300 worth of goods.
- Raising the threshold doesn't mean that individuals won't be punished for low-level theft, it just means that instead of serving up to five years in state prison for theft valued at \$300, they would serve up to one year in county jail.
- Raising the felony theft threshold is unlikely to impact overall property crime rates. States that increased their thresholds reported roughly the same average decrease in crime as those that still haven't changed their theft laws.<sup>2</sup>

### THE SOLUTION

- **Raise the monetary threshold for certain felony theft crimes to \$2,500.** Put Florida on par with the thresholds in other states. Raise the threshold, reduce the length of incarceration, avoid the lifelong repercussions of a felony conviction, and save taxpayer money.

# 55%

of Floridians support raising the monetary threshold to \$1,500.

### Join the Campaign for Criminal Justice Reform

Sign up at [www.BetterJusticeFL.com](http://www.BetterJusticeFL.com)  
CCJR will send you information about ways to participate in local and statewide coalition efforts.

General requests can be made at [contact@betterjusticefl.com](mailto:contact@betterjusticefl.com)

Media requests can be made at [media@betterjusticefl.com](mailto:media@betterjusticefl.com)

<sup>1</sup><http://www.dc.state.fl.us/oth/Quickfacts.html>

<sup>2</sup><http://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/issue-briefs/2017/04/the-effects-of-changing-felony-theft-thresholds>