



STATEMENT OF AT&T CONNECTICUT

Regarding Raised House Bill 7239 An Act Preventing The Theft of Copper

Before the Judiciary Committee

February 26, 2007

Proposal:

Raised House Bill 7239 would require scrap metal processors to comply with state and local licensing and registration requirements applicable to junk dealers.

Comments:

AT&T Connecticut supports Raised House Bill 7239.

AT&T's telephone company operations continue to utilize copper as a critical part of the communications infrastructure. As a result of increased worldwide demand for metals such as copper, theft of copper has similarly increased throughout the nation, including in Connecticut. There have been numerous instances of copper theft from telephone company operations around the country, including instances where copper has been removed from live networks, resulting in service outages and disruption of critical functionality like E911. While AT&T has fortunately not to date experienced theft of live plant, it has experienced theft of copper from storage facilities, and appreciates the committee's willingness to consider action before the situation becomes more critical. Relative to AT&T's sense of urgency is the fact that, prior to this year, AT&T had recorded only 8 incidents of theft of copper, but experienced 4 in January of this year alone. Raised House Bill 7239 can help stem the tide by closing a gap which makes it easier for those who steal copper for profit to elude law enforcement.

Specifically, the legislature should treat scrap metal processors the same way it treats junk dealers. Today, junk dealers are subject to a variety of requirements to which scrap metal processors are exempt. Key to our concern here are the transactional reporting requirements. The sale of copper to a junk dealer requires the seller to provide identifying information which is recorded and reported. Thus, if the copper was stolen, a paper trail is created which assists law enforcement in locating the thief. On the other hand, an individual selling copper to a scrap metal processor need not provide such information, thereby impeding law enforcement efforts. In this fashion, the current process allows a criminal to steal copper, jeopardize the communications infrastructure, and sell that copper to a scrap metal processor at greatly reduced risk of detection and punishment by law enforcement personnel. Better identification and reporting discourages criminal activity because it increases the likelihood of apprehension. AT&T encourages the committee to extend reporting requirements applicable to junk dealers to scrap metal dealers.

Conclusion:

AT&T Connecticut supports Raised House Bill 7239. Worldwide demand has led to an increase in the theft of copper for quick sale. Since copper constitutes a critical part of telephone company infrastructure, the increased theft poses a risk to communications. AT&T believes that by requiring scrap metal processors to comply with state and local licensing and registration requirements applicable to junk dealers, the legislature can improve the tracking of copper sales and thus help prevent the theft of copper.