

# Cindy Weeldreyer

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May 16, 2017

The Honorable Jeff Barker, Chair  
Oregon House Judiciary Committee  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Representative Barker, and Judiciary Committee Members:

I am writing in support of SB 488 that increases protections for car theft victims to prevent them from being victimized a second time by towing companies. Thank you for this opportunity to share with you the details of a most unfortunate experience that happened to the disabled client I work for. Below is a detailed description of the pain and suffering she endured after her car was stolen and she was told she had to pay nearly the equivalent of her monthly disability check to get it back.

My client Jeannie Handsaker had her 2000 Honda Civic stolen with a shaved key on March 5, 2016, from the parking lot of Riverview Terrace, the county-owned senior and disabled residential building here in Cottage Grove. Jeannie is not well and lives with chronic back and hip pain. In the past year she has been in and out of the emergency room and the hospital. In late 2015, she spent two months in a rehab center strengthening her legs so she could walk again.

On March 5, she reported the theft to Cottage Grove Police and it was entered into the database. Nine days later (3/14) Eugene Police recovered the car and notified CGPD. Due to an oversight, Jeannie was not notified her car was found. For the next week her car was impounded by Dannevick's (dba A+ Towing) with storage fees accumulating at the rate of \$50 per day. It wasn't until Saturday, March 19, she learned her car was recovered via an information packet sent by the Lane County District Attorney's Victims Assistance Program. It was very stressful for her to wait until Monday, March 21, to learn where her car was and to contact the towing company to recover it.

She lives on a small monthly Medicare/Medicaid disability check with little left over after bills and food expenses. This 2000 Honda Civic was the best car she could afford. It had a salvage title so she could only have liability coverage on it. After the theft, she was told her policy wouldn't pay anything on her claim.

She called and spoke with the A+ Towing receptionist who told her, as of that day, she needed to pay \$585 and immediately come and get it. If she didn't a \$50/day fee would continue to be added to her bill. The receptionist said after 30 days without payment they would sell the car to settle the debt and any remaining debt would be sent to a collections company. At that point she could then sue the car thief in court to get her money back. (Yeah right!)

That's when I got a phone call from a totally distraught friend who was terrified that what little credit she had worked so hard to recover would be lost again. I contacted the company to learn what specific fees were included in the total.

\$120 Towing  
40 Labor  
50 Hazardous Material Handling (car was filled with used needles)  
75 DMV Title/Appraisal  
400 Storage Fee @ \$50/day

My experience as a county commissioner helped me negotiate with the owner and persuaded him to sell the car for salvage and have the amount applied to her bill. After the sale to a salvage company, there was a small balance remaining. He agreed to write it off and her bill was paid in full. Fortunately, CG Police paid all her storage fees, but that meant she was left with a few hundred dollars, no car and no money for a replacement.

We thank the committee members for considering this matter and using Jeannie's misfortune to prevent others in the future from suffering as she has in a circumstance she had no control over.

All the best,

Cindy Weeldreyer

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Lane County Commissioner [1995-2002]