



## **SUPPORT HB 543**

### **Background**

Each state sets a statutory definition of which thefts are felonies (punishable by longer sentences in prison) and which are misdemeanors (punishable by shorter sentences in jail).

Currently, the dollar threshold triggering felony theft is \$1,000. This numerical amount was set in the 1990s and has not been modified in years, despite inflation.

### **What does HB 543 do?**

This Legislation would amend Idaho Code 18-2407 to raise the dollar threshold triggering felony theft from \$1000 to \$2500 for those without a record of theft in the past 7 years.

### **Why should I support the legislation?**

- The dollar amount separating felony theft from misdemeanor theft has not been increased in years. As a result, inflation has made Idaho's grand theft statute more punitive each year.
- Since 2000, at least 39 states raised their statutory threshold, including nine states that did it twice. These changes reflect not only the gradual impact of inflation, but also allowed states to focus corrections resources on more serious offenses and made punishments more proportionate to theft crimes.
- [Studies](#) show that decreasing the punishment for minor thefts does not result in an increase in property crime.
- Updating felony theft statutes is one simple way to reduce the number of people serving time in prison for low-level offenses.
- Making more minor thefts into misdemeanors will spare more people from collateral consequences of felony convictions that can limit people's access to public housing, welfare benefits, and voting.