



OFFICE OF THE
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PRESS RELEASE

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**Orange County Auto Theft Task Force to Continue
Combatting Professional Auto Thieves Following Unanimous
Orange County Board of Supervisors Vote**

District Attorney Spitzer has been warning the community about increased auto theft for years; auto theft increased 25% in Orange County over last year; thieves are stealing cars at a rate of nearly one an hour every day.

SANTA ANA, Calif. – The Orange County Board of Supervisors voted unanimously today to enact funding to allow the Orange County Auto Theft Task Force (OCATT) to continue combatting auto theft across the County.

Despite a 25 percent increase in auto theft in Orange County over last year, OCATT was in jeopardy of being disbanded due to a funding structure that had not been updated since the task force was established 27 years ago. Today's vote ensures that the task force will continue to work to eradicate auto theft, loan fraud and other vehicle related schemes that result in higher insurance premiums, high vehicle costs and less tax revenue for Orange County consumers and business owners.

Orange County has the third largest number of registered vehicles in California, behind only Los Angeles and San Diego Counties, making it a target rich environment for professional auto thieves.

"I have been warning about the increase of auto theft since AB 109 was passed by the state Legislature in 2011, shifting thousands of criminals back into our communities. The [Public Policy Institute found a direct correlation](#) between AB 109 and an increase in auto theft," said Orange County District Attorney Todd Spitzer. "We are all suffering the consequences of AB 109, through the rising cost of insurance premiums and vehicle prices which are a result of the increase in auto theft. Today's vote provides law enforcement with the resources necessary to combat this disturbing trend and protect consumers and business owners from being further victimized."

Established in 1993, OCATT multi-jurisdictional law enforcement program funded by vehicle license registration fees. Funding to OCATT have not been increased since the task force was created.

- In 27 years, OCATT has accounted for the arrests of more than 1,700 suspects and recovered more than 6,900 vehicles worth in excess of \$105 million

- Over the last five years, OCATT has helped arrest 654 auto thieves and recover 1,489 stolen vehicles valued at more than \$24.4 million.
- Auto theft in Orange County has increased by 25 percent over last year
- Auto loan fraud origination increased by 300% between 2009 and 2018
 - Resulted in nearly \$6 billion in losses
- Auto theft criminal filings by the Orange County District Attorney's Office have increased 30 percent over last year

In addition to investigating and arresting auto thieves, OCATT also:

- Provides free auto theft training to Orange County based law enforcement agencies
- Provides assistance and training courses to auto dealerships and finance companies.
- OCATT consistently assists smaller law enforcement agencies in the county who lack personnel and resources to conduct proactive enforcement operations within their respective jurisdictions.

“Today is a great day for the Orange County Auto Theft Task Force (OCATT), but more importantly for Orange County vehicle owners and businesses. Professional auto thieves and criminal organizations continue to exist by utilizing identity theft to prey on unsuspecting victims to sustain their presence in Orange County for the purpose of conducting illegal activity,” said OCATT Commander Gil Campa. “This effort would not have been successful without the support of our communities who support law enforcement’s efforts, our allied agency partners, OCATT’s participating agencies, auto industry stakeholders, the Orange County Business Council, Orange County Taxpayer’s Association, and the Orange County Board of Supervisors. A very special thank you to John Sackrison, the Executive Director of the Orange County Automobile Dealer’s Association. John recognized the significance of OCATT and spearheaded our efforts to ensure our existence into the future in order to safeguard Orange County vehicle owners and businesses from professional auto thieves. OCATT will continue to proactively combat and deter auto theft by aggressively seeking out at those responsible.”

As a result of SB 2139, each registered passenger vehicle in the county is charged a \$1 fee and each registered commercial vehicle in the county is charged a \$2 fee.

On September 6, 2013, AB 767 was signed into law which authorized every county to increase its motor vehicle fee from \$1 to \$2, and its commercial vehicle service fee from \$2 to \$4, upon adoption of a resolution by its Board of Supervisors, and submission of the resolution to the Department.

Today’s vote brings Orange County in line with the fees currently charged by Los Angeles, Riverside, and San Bernardino Counties.

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