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Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary my name is Bill King and I am the Sheriff of York County, Maine. I am here today to urge you to support LD 353, a Resolve to Establish the Commission to Recommend Methods for preventing Deed fraud in the State.

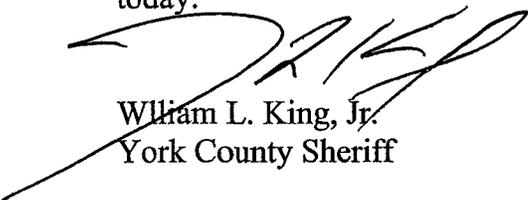
This is the second time I have spoken in support of deed-theft legislation. This bill, which would create a commission to study this complicated issue, is a much more measured approach to study this scam (and how to discourage it) with all of the stakeholders having input.

Scams are commonplace and unknowingly, a victim usually does something or is careless which exposes him or her to a scam. In seller impersonator and other forms of deed theft scams, the victims do absolutely nothing – and there is no way to stop the scammers. Because so much of our information is available “online” the thief is able to harvest enough information to contact an unsuspecting real estate agent and request that they list the property. It has occurred dozens of times that I am aware of.

Real Estate professionals, Mortgage Brokers, Title Companies and attorneys have become much more careful in the last year or so and most of these scams are caught before they gain much traction. However, the scammers, even if not successful in obtaining property, have stolen time and attention from hard working professionals. This scam is so commonplace that I stopped counting or collecting reports and most law enforcement officers I’ve spoken with believe it is a “civil” issue or falls along the lines of the lottery scams because they are unsolvable. And they are. Last week, a previous intended victim contacted me because her vacant piece of land has been offered (again) for sale by scammers!

This bi-partisan legislation has the support of the Maine Sheriff’s Association as well as the hundreds of people I’ve spoken with about this dilemma. Yesterday, I presented a short program on deed thefts to a Rotary Club in Westbrook. A banking official told me that she has a client who took a second mortgage on their vacant property, not because they needed the money but because they wanted the property to show on public records that it had an encumbrance!

I am available for any questions if you have any and thank you for allowing me to speak today.

  
William L. King, Jr.  
York County Sheriff