

FLORIDA SEEKS TO RECREATE EXPANDED ATPA

By

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In 1992, the Florida Legislature created the Motor Vehicle Theft Prevention Authority (MVTPA). The authority was funded by a \$.50 semi-annual assessment on motor vehicles registrations. A great deal of money was collected, and was put in a trust fund. From that trust fund the annual allocation for the MVTPA was only about 16 percent of the money collected. The Florida Legislature had some other priorities for the rest of the trust fund and by law they are permitted to take money from trust funds to support general revenue programs.

Despite the limitation of funds, The authority, consisting of chiefs of police, sheriffs, and other stakeholders, amply funded departmental as well as multi-agency task forces, educational programs, prevention activities, and a separate law enforcement advisory committee that conducted statewide auto theft summit conferences, with nationally known auto theft prevention and investigation personalities as speakers, along with locally led breakout groups. The authority funded many other programs during its existence.

The staff for the authority were employees of the Department of Legal Affairs, the agency run by the state Attorney General. For the ten year duration of the MVTPA, the staff did an excellent job. However, in 2002, the legislature decided to use all the monies collected for general revenue programs. As a result, the MVTPA was defunded. In 2011, in a cleanup bill, the legislature repealed the MVTPA language from the statutes. This brings us to the present.

Even before the repeal of the language, the Florida Auto Theft Intelligence Unit (FATIU), was working with members of the legislature to try to get the program reinstated. A bill was introduced in the state House of Representatives, that assessed \$.50 semi-annually on motor vehicle insurance policies but no groundwork was done and the bill went nowhere. I don't recall

that the bill was even heard in a committee or subcommittee. Since that time, FATIU has been working on a comprehensive package of its own that will satisfy investigators and should be acceptable to administrators and all stakeholders. The current version is the product of more than two years of give and take by members of FATIU. The groundwork still has not been laid but we have a comprehensive package so that we can now begin our efforts to sell it to stakeholders.

As we discussed ideas and got input from members, the concept kept expanding. We decided at the outset that any program established needed to include cargo theft, in addition to motor vehicle theft. Then we learned that in 2012, Florida had the unfortunate distinction of having 24 percent of the national total of watercraft theft. It goes without saying that we have a lot of water on three sides of our state. Many of the members of FATIU represent agencies that have marine investigation units.

The result of joint efforts, our comprehensive package is now called the Motor Vehicle, Cargo, and Watercraft Theft Prevention Authority (MVCWTPA). However, it is still a work in progress. After attending the ATAP meeting at the international conference of IAATI in FT. Worth, Texas, where several members read the Florida proposal and made suggestions for improvement. They were good suggestions. As a result, FATIU will be doing additional work on the document before it will be ready for contacting the agencies and organizations whose support and funding will be essential to getting the legislation passed.