

# Senate approves new penalties for carjacking

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The Senate approved 26-7 legislation to create a specific felony for carjacking and up the penalties for repeat offenses.

SB 58 would carry fines of up to \$50,000 and prison sentences of up to 15 years for carjacking. Repeat offenders, meanwhile, of taking and driving a car would go up to \$25,000 in fines or up to 12 years and six months in prison.

GOP state Sen. Leah Vukmir, one of the co-sponsors, said lawmakers have sat “idly by” as carjacking offenses have increased 50 percent.

“These actions are inexcusable,” said Vukmir, R-Brookfield. “Victims are people, your neighbors, people who live in fear, they are friends, they are family members who have endured a trauma by repeat offenders because a system fails to hold them accountable.”

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Sen. Leah Taylor, D-Milwaukee, countered the bill represents a “lock ‘em up” mentality that does not work. She said it represents a frequent response of seeking to increase penalties rather than looking at the root of a problem.

“The question should be what’s the problem and what can we do to address it?” Taylor said.

Taylor and fellow Milwaukee Dem Chris Larson opposed the bill, while their colleagues Tim Carpenter and La Tonya Johnson joined Republicans in backing the bill.

Sen. Tom Tiffany, R-Hazelhurst, missed the original vote. But his support was later

added to the final roll call.