



March 7th, 2023

Senator Wanggaard, Chair  
Senator Jacque, Vice-Chair  
Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety

**Testimony on 2023 Senate Bill 21**

*Relating to: the value of tangible personal property allowed in state correctional facilities.*

Dear Chairman Wanggaard, Vice-Chair Jacque, and Committee Members:

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak on Senate Bill 21. This legislation is an important tool that will help make some long overdue changes to an outdated limitation.

In their administrative code, the Department of Corrections places limits on the value of personal property a prisoner may possess. The current limit for personal property is set at \$75. There is also a separate limit for musical instruments and electronic items, which is set at \$350. These limits were set in 1994, and they have not been updated since.

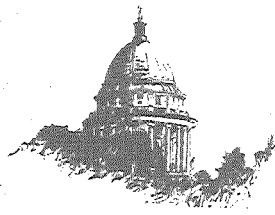
While these limits are necessary for the security and protection of corrections staff, the lack of adjustment over the years in response to inflation and other economic pressures is now preventing inmates from having basic items that may be necessary for their moral and spiritual development, like a Bible.

Believe it or not, this actually happened. A few years ago, Assembly author state Representative Paul Tittel (R-Manitowoc) was contacted by a constituent whose son was incarcerated and attending a Bible study. The son asked his mother to purchase the recommended Bible, and she did so through the approved vendor. However, when the Bible arrived at the prison, staff refused to give it to the son because it exceeded the \$75 personal property limit. Furthermore, instead of returning it back to the constituent, prison staff disposed of the Bible afterwards. Had the limits been updated at any point over the preceding years, this unfortunate scenario may not have happened.

At the end of the day, Wisconsin's prison system should be about rehabilitation, reform, and justice. Sadly, this is just another example of government failing to keep up with the times, and, as a result, denying inmates the ability to change and grow into better citizens. I appreciate the new push to update these limits and look forward to reforming this outdated code.

Respectfully,

Senator Jesse James  
23rd Senate District  
[Sen.James@legis.wisconsin.gov](mailto:Sen.James@legis.wisconsin.gov)



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# PAUL TITTL

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STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 25<sup>TH</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety

Senate Bill 21

March 7, 2023

First of all, I would like to thank you, Chairman Wanggaard and committee members, for allowing me to testify before you concerning Senate Bill 21.

As Senator James mentioned, this bill raises the limit for certain types of property prisoners in the correctional system may possess from the current \$75 to \$150.

I often say the best ideas for legislation don't always come from a bunch legislators sitting around a table in Madison. They come from people around the state. This bill is an example.

A woman contacted me about her son who is serving time in prison for vehicular homicide. He had consumed too much alcohol at a party and killed someone while driving home.

During his time in prison, he decided he would do whatever he could to make the best of his 14 year sentence. He began attending a Bible study and enjoyed it. He asked the Lutheran pastor leading the study which Bible he should get, and the pastor recommend a \$105 study Bible.

The mother purchased the Bible and mailed it to him. However, prison officials would not give it to him, because the administrative code restricts prisoners from possessing personal property above certain dollar amounts. The limit is \$75 for all personal property other than electronic items, musical instruments, and medically prescribed items.

If the personal property limit had been keeping pace with inflation, the son would have been allowed to possess the Bible.

I brought the issue to Secretary Carr's attention in early 2019, so you may have heard the department has been working on it. I have appreciated their efforts, but I think it's time for us to step in and do the right thing.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify before you today. I would appreciate your support for this change and am happy to take any questions.

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# WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

Governor Tony Evers / Secretary Kevin A. Carr

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Tuesday, March 7, 2023

Chairman Wanggaard  
Vice-Chair Jacque  
Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety

**Re: SB-021 DOC Property Value - Informational Only**

Chairman Wanggaard,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony for informational purposes only on SB-021 DOC Property Value. I regret being unable to attend in person to provide this feedback; however, our agency will be presenting to the Assembly Committee on Corrections during the time of the hearing.

While our agency supports the general concept and spirit of SB-021, DOC has been working through the Administrative Rule process to revise DOC 309 related to Inmate Personal Property. The revisions seek to increase property value limits to align with the overall increased costs of living. Our agency believes these changes are necessary in order to maintain the safety and welfare of staff and persons in our care. We also believe that having personal property limits in Administrative Code versus statute allows us greater flexibility for any future changes that may be needed.

Currently, this project is in the rule drafting part of the process. This week, DOC's Administrative Rules Coordinator will be completing the draft revisions and sending it to the Division of Adult Institution Administrator for approval.

I hope this information will be considered during your discussions of SB-021. I believe our goal of ensuring safety in DOC's secure facilities is aligned, and these revisions will take us one step closer to achieving that mission. If you have further questions, please feel free to reach out to me directly at 608-240-5056 or [Anna.Neal@wisconsin.gov](mailto:Anna.Neal@wisconsin.gov).

Sincerely,

*Anna Neal*

Anna Neal  
Legislative Advisor  
Wisconsin Department of Corrections  
3099 E. Washington Ave  
Madison, WI 53704

February 18, 2019

Craig M. Seefeldt Doc #623136  
Kettle Moraine Correctional Institution  
P.O. Box 282  
Plymouth WI 53073

ACLU of Wisconsin Foundation - Legal Dept.  
207 East Buffalo Street #325  
Milwaukee WI 53202-5774

Re: Mother's gift of a Lutheran Study Bible "NOT ALLOWED" and "DISPOSED OF" by KMCI Property/DOC.

Attention: Client Selection Committee

My name is Craig M. Seefeldt, an inmate at Kettle Moraine Correctional Institution, I submit for review a summary of events that describe my Bible denial matter with the sincere hope that you will accept my case and prevent this from ever happening again.

**4/11/18 KMCI/Lutheran Bible Study Group:** I asked Pastor Radzack which study Bible would best serve me as a member of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran synod? Which Publisher sold it?

**4/18/18 Lutheran Bible Study Group:** (WELS) Pastor Radzack brought in his study Bible: it was leather-bound with maps, footnotes, and cross-references. He said that Northwestern Publishing House in Milwaukee sold it for about \$100.00. At that point, we waved KMCI Chaplain Tenpenny into the conversation and inquired what needed to be done to order a study Bible from them. She responded, "Yes, you can order from them, but quickly qualified that statement with, "you just need to make sure they send a receipt along with the order or KMCI Property will deny it! She did not mention a DOC \$75.00 maximum allowable value for a Bible.

**5/7/18, 5/8/18 KMCI/Property Unit:** I was excited as I walked over to the Property Unit; my Bible must have arrived! I was dumbfounded to learn that KMCI's interpretation of the DOC Property Rules would yield to a denial of my Mother's gift of the Lutheran Study Bible. The Property/Mailroom Sergeants said the Bible was denied because "it exceeded \$75.00" and I was "supposed to have prior approval to order over the price allowance".

**5/7/18 – 8/8/18 KMCI/Property/Ice Examiner/Warden/DOC Secretary:** I attempted to remedy my Bible denial matter with KMCI and the DOC to no avail. Deny! Deny! Deny!... By this time the matter had crossed over 10 desktops!

**8/20/18 KMCI/Property/Unit 5 Mail-call:** I received formal notice in the form of a "yellow inmate copy" that demonstrated that my mother's gift of the Lutheran study Bible was "NOT ALLOWED" and was subsequently "DISPOSED OF" (without my knowledge) by KMCI. KMCI alleges I "refused to send out or dispose" of the Bible, not true! I never refused anything- on 8/8/18 I merely stated, that because of the KMCI/DOC Bible denial, I didn't believe that I could legally send out the Bible or dispose of it" as I did not possess the bundle of property rights necessary and DOC 303.49 (2) forbid me to send out "anything which could be considered contraband". Sergeant Trippler replied, "Salinas will handle this". I never heard back from Complain Examiner Salinas or Sergeant Trippler!

**9/5/18 KMCI/Mailroom:** I sent by certified mail a notarized NOTICE OF INJURY AND CLAIM to the Wisconsin Attorney General.

I hope that after reading this you are as dumbfounded as I was to learn that this could even happen in today's America. And this is not an isolated incident, I know of two other study Bibles, on my unit alone, that were also denied by KMCI. These additional Bibles had receipts and were valued at less than the supposed \$75.00 limit. Evidentially, "stitched leather Bibles are strictly forbidden" and also those with "glued covers" according to Sergeant Tripler. PLEASE!!! Do not let this stand. Help me help others – so no one has to be denied a religious book again!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Craig M. Seefeldt". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Craig" being the most prominent.

Craig M. Seefeldt

CMS

Cc: State Representative Paul Tittl

Encl: KMCI property receipt

NOTICE OF INJURY AND CLAIM (reproduction)

Reproduction of Original Sent to Atty General on 9/5/18



Wisconsin Department of Justice  
DJ-LS-25 (Rev. 2/17)

Note: I have complete documentation all steps I went thru

STATE OF WISCONSIN  
NOTICE OF INJURY AND CLAIM  
Pursuant to Wis. Stat. Section 893.82

CMS

This notice must be served upon the Attorney General by certified mail within 120 days of the event giving rise to the claim for such injury, damage or death at 114 East State Capitol, Madison, Wisconsin 53707-7857.

Claimant's Name <b>Craig M. Seefeldt # 623136</b>	
Address <b>Kettle Moraine Correctional Institution P.O. BOX 282 Plymouth WI 53073</b>	Phone <b>N/A</b>
Time and Date of Occurrence <b>4:30 PM 8/20/18</b>	Location <b>Kettle Moraine Correctional Inst. W971 Forest Drive Plymouth WI 53073</b>
Statement of Circumstances Giving Rise to the Claim for Such Injury, Damage or Death and Names of Persons Involved, Including Name(s) of State Officer(s), Agent(s) or Employee(s). <p>On 8/20/18 I received formal notice from Kettle Moraine Correctional Inst. in the form of a yellow "Inmate Copy" of a property receipt #DOC-237, that stated my family's gift of a "Lutheran Study Bible" was "Not Allowed" and was "disposed" of. Specifically noted on the receipt: the "Lutheran Study Bible" exceeds price limit of \$75.00 book costs \$104.99 "Not Allowed" (hand stamped in red) KMCI-2018-12051-Deny.</p> <p>*Appealed + denied. Only send out or dispose of. May Not Donate. 8/6/18 KS (Initials). Other highlighted notes / Incorrect Statement</p> <p>"Dispose of on 8/19/18 as I'm refused on 8/8/18 to send out or dispose of." 8/6/18 KS (Initials)</p> <p>on 8/8/18 I was called to KMCI Property: officer Trippler stated, "that I could only send the bible out or throw it away." I responded, "that I didn't believe I could legally do either - as my bundle of ownership rights!!"</p> <p>(If additional space is needed, continue on backside of this notice form.)</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Cont'd over →</p>	

I certify and solemnly swear that the above-described injury, damage or death actually occurred, that I have read the above foregoing notice of injury and claim, and that the same is true to my own knowledge except as to those matters stated upon information and belief and as to those matters, I believe the same to be true.

Date: 9/4/18

Craig M. Seefeldt  
Signature of Claimant

State of Wisconsin  
County of Sheboygan

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 4th day of September, 2018, by Craig M. Seefeldt

Signed By a KMCI Notary employee

Notary Public, State of Wisconsin

My Commission: \_\_\_\_\_

noted from front page...

Were denied by the Dept of Corrections' decisions and Furthermore I was not allowed to send out "anything which could be considered contraband" Contrary to DOC Policy 303.49 (e).

Note: (Captain Hofman noted in 8/6/18 letter to me "You have Exhausted your administrative remedies... this Contraband will be processed per Administrative code Doc 303 and DAI Policy 306.00.16")

<sup>property</sup> Officer Trippler then stated "Salinas will handle this."

This was the last KMCJ Communication to me on this matter (Prior to receiving the 8/20/18 Property Receipt).

Names of Involved

- State of Wisconsin
- Property/Mailroom officer Trippler
- Property/Mailroom officer Larsen
- Chaplain L. Tenpenny
- Program Supervisor-Chapel T. Staehler
- Administrative Captain Hofmann
- Security Director Pollard
- Institution Complaint Examiner K. Salinas
- Warden Robert Humphreys
- Corrections Complaint examiner <sup>Brad Hompe</sup> ~~R. [unclear]~~
- Office of the Secretary C. O'Donnell

Further Note

I was seen by Dr. Payne at KMCJ (PSU) in July 2018 after I submitted a Psychological Service Request form on 6/23/18 asking for help in dealing with the anxiety/emotional distress caused by this matter. (Sleeplessness, anger, fury, loss of appetite & weight loss.)

iso note KMCJ; has denied other study bibles to people on my unit for "Security Reasons" relating to cover style.

One officer stated "we will never have those Bibles at this Institution!"