



128 DORRANCE STREET, SUITE 220  
PROVIDENCE, RI 02903  
401.831.7171 (t)  
401.831.7175 (f)  
[www.riaclu.org](http://www.riaclu.org)

## **COMMENTS ON 14 H-7619, RELATING TO THEFT OF FARM PRODUCTS**

**March 19, 2014**

The ACLU opposes this bill, which would make it a felony, subject to five years imprisonment, for a person to steal any “farm product,” which is broadly defined to include, among other things, “supplies used or produced in a farming operation,” that is worth more than \$250.

This penalty is clearly draconian, and way out of line with current larceny laws, which generally set the threshold for felony penalties at property worth \$1,500 or more. In fact, in this same section of the General Laws, the theft of a “horse or other domestic animal” is a misdemeanor. R.I.G.L. 11-41-8.

Stealing a \$250 piece of equipment should be criminal, but it should not be turned from a misdemeanor into a major felony solely because the theft took place on a farm rather than a person’s backyard. In light of theft laws already on the books, this bill is unnecessary in any event, and we therefore oppose its passage.