Health of competitive auto repair industry dependent upon â€˜Right to Repairâ€™ Act

by Kathleen Schmatz

Dear Editor:

Millions of car owners trust independent repair shops to provide affordable and competitive automotive repair service. Unfortunately, the ability of motorists to choose where to get their vehicle repaired could be seriously challenged in the future.

Vehicles engine, safety and entertainment systems are becoming increasingly sophisticated, with virtually every vehicle system either monitored or controlled by computers. Servicing these vehicles will require that independent shops have full access to the same information and tools that the car companies make available to their franchised dealer network.

However, in many cases the car manufacturers are already making it difficult to obtain the information and tools needed to repair todayâ€™s vehicles, and we fear that the future will only become worse. Absent full access, local repair shops might not be able to compete, thus creating a repair monopoly where affordable and convenient repairs currently available to car owners is sacrificed to increase profits for the dealer service bays and big car companies.

Car companies say it is in their best interest to make information and tools available to independent repair shops, but the truth is that they and their franchised dealers are making more money servicing vehicles than they are selling new cars. Therefore, despite their lip service, they have little incentive to work with the independent service industry to ensure that we can compete on a level playing field with their dealers.

Thatâ€™s why the future health of a competitive automotive repair industry is dependent upon the immediate passage by Congress of the Motor Vehicles Ownersâ€™ Right to Repair Act. This legislation requires that car manufacturers make available to independent service shops the same information and tools that they provide to their dealerships. After all, shouldnâ€™t the car owner make the choice of where they have their vehicle repaired and not the car company?

I urge everyone who owns a car to contact their elected official in support of Right to Repair legislation. Go to www.righttorepair.org for additional information and to send a letter in support of this legislation.

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