



Right to Repair

If you are like most folks, once your new car warranty expires, you take your vehicle to a repair shop you trust, and is convenient to your home or business. But, imagine if you could no longer do that, and had no choice but to return to the new car dealership for the entire life of your car. This could happen. Why? Cars are run by computers today, and car manufacturers don't want to release the computer codes required to determine what is wrong with a car before it can be fixed. Without these codes, the local independent business owner cannot compete.

Would the service be the same? Would the prices be competitive? How convenient would it be? Whether you like your car dealer or not, it doesn't take an economist to figure out that when there is no competition, prices rise, and service suffers. This is a consumer protection issue.

In Michigan alone, there are nearly 9.3 million vehicles and only 779 car dealerships. I'm not great at math, but 9.3 million divided by 779 looks like a disaster in the making for the consumer unless something is done. In addition, there are thousands of businesses in the state, which repair automobiles and keep you on the road. Over time, they would be forced out of business because there will be fewer and fewer repairs they could perform effectively.

Many in Congress fully understand the problem, and for the last couple of years have pressed for passage of the Motor Vehicle Owners Right to Repair Act. The bill would require car companies to share the same information and tools with independent repair facilities that they provide their new car dealers. Last year, the legislation gathered 100 co-sponsors, but Congress failed to pass the bill before it adjourned.

The American public is not aware of the problem and its impact on both their pocketbooks and their mobility. Therefore, they are not contacting their elected officials about their concerns. However, the new-car dealers and the large car companies have been making their voices heard in strong opposition to the legislation. Needless to say, they have very large and organized lobbying organizations in Washington.

While they may be powerful inside the halls of Congress, the motoring public is considerably larger and we can make our voices heard in the voting booth. Your congressional delegation must hear from you. If we work together, we can pass consumers' Right to Repair legislation and thus ensure that the motoring public, and not the car companies, determines where its vehicles are repaired.

Call your senators' and House representatives' offices or visit www.righttorepair.org to send a message supporting Right to Repair to your congressional delegation. Tell them that it should be your right to choose your service and repair source.

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