



New Jersey Gasoline, C-Store, Automotive Association (NJGCA)

(Formerly New Jersey Gasoline Retailers Association)

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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August 6, 2012

New Jersey consumers deserve a Right to Repair

*Business owners and consumer groups were nearly able get initiative passed in 2008;
Proposal deserves renewed consideration in light events in the Bay State.
In a dismal economy, every dollar counts; Garden State motorists deserve a choice in
where to have their vehicles repaired.*

Sal Risalvato, Executive Director of the New Jersey Gasoline, Convenience, Automotive Association (**NJGCA**), released the following statement on the pending approval of the Right to Repair Act in Massachusetts:

“In October 2008, NJGCA joined with small business owners, consumer advocacy groups, and frustrated motorists to successfully lobby the Legislature to pass essential pro-consumer legislation. United with our allies, New Jersey was among the first states to push the Motor Vehicle Owners' Right to Repair Act through a single house of a state legislature! Unfortunately, its passage in the General Assembly came toward the end of the 213th Legislative Session and the bill died before it could be heard in the State Senate. The Massachusetts Legislature’s recent compromise on this initiative, and Governor Patrick’s forthcoming signature, only renews the importance of passing Right to Repair in the Garden State!”, said Risalvato.

As modern automobiles have become increasingly more sophisticated, manufacturers have incorporated advanced computer and diagnostic technologies as integral elements of their vehicles. These advancements have made today’s cars more reliable and efficient, but have also made them more complicated to diagnose and repair. As such,

consumers are often forced to get their vehicle repaired solely by a manufacturers' dealer network, denying them a choice in where to have a vehicles serviced.

"Today, independent repair shops are forbidden access to essential vehicle codes and information, halting them from fully diagnosing or repairing a patron's automobile. Rather than having a trusted mechanic repair their car, these customers are often forced to get their vehicle fixed by a dealership, merely because this vital data is kept from small shop owners. Even if motorists were handy, and wanted to take on the repair themselves, they are denied the required data! These prohibitions restrict a consumer's ability play in the free market and get the lowest available price. For consumers, it is both unfair and unnecessary during in this current economic climate," Sal stated.

The New Jersey Motor Vehicle Owners' Right to Repair Act (A-352) is sponsored by Assemblyman Reed Gusciora and is currently waiting to be discussed by the Assembly Consumer Affairs Committee. The proposal would permit mechanic shops to buy, at a fair price, the same data that car manufacturers give to their dealerships so they can make needed and necessary repairs on patrons' vehicles. Similar to the proposal in Massachusetts, legislators in Boston were able to reach a compromise that would still make this information available, but permit automakers extra time to comply with the law.

"I'm excited about what Legislators were able to accomplish in the Bay State and I applaud their efforts. The surprising turn of events in Massachusetts should be a spark to reignite this debate in New Jersey. Though NJGCA and our allies have remained committed to getting this legislation passed in Trenton, other state priorities have taken precedence away from this issue the past few years. However, when this economy has every consumer on a tight budget, and as motorists keep their cars longer to squeeze more life out of them, there is no reason that we should deny them the opportunity to save money in having that vehicle repaired. The only way to accomplish that is through choice, and as things stand today, that choice is to either have their car repaired by a dealer or not at all," said Sal.

"The economy is hurting everyone right now and motorists deserve a better hand than the one they've been dealt. There are 1,500 knowledgeable small business owners in my association -- and thousands of others besides -- who are eager to compete with the big dealer group for the consumers' business. This is a free market economy and we should be empowering consumer choice, not restricting it. I encourage legislators in the months ahead to follow Massachusetts's example and give their constituents the ability to decide who fixes their car and at what price, Risalvato concluded.

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