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Americans should have the right to choose which new technologies are used in their vehicle, as well as the right to choose who installs these products.

Congress Takes on Right to Repair Legislation

Today, the cars we drive are becoming increasingly advanced. Modern automobiles rely heavily on computers and electronics for nearly all aspects of a vehicle's operation, including emissions control and safety functions such as the seat belt chime, automatic crash notification and turn signals. Advancements in technology also have led to demand for in-dash navigation systems, in-vehicle televisions and DVD players, security alarms, satellite radio and Bluetooth systems in many of today's vehicles.

Understanding the Problem

During the past several years, automobile manufacturers have begun to implement access codes, which have the effect of locking aftermarket installers and products out of new vehicles. The problem, which is most prevalent in vehicles made in 2000 through the present, is widespread and includes many of the major automobile manufacturers. According to a 2005 CEA report, more than eight in 10 installers (84 percent) experienced what they considered to be an "installation challenge." The challenges installers faced were many and varied, including cosmetic integration (22 percent), time to complete the installation

(21 percent), and loss of vehicle functions (17 percent). This threatens the future of thousands of small installers across America.

What's more, many new automobiles include their own proprietary multimedia network. When factory-installed mobile electronics, such as a stereo, are removed from the vehicle, the system no longer works and will not allow the addition of aftermarket replacement products.

A Legislative Approach for Right to Repair

During the 109th Congress, legislation was introduced by Representatives Joe Barton (R-TX), Darrell Issa (R-CA) and Edolphus Towns (D-NY) to address many of these issues, including leveling the playing field between small independent repair shops and new car dealers. The legislation, known as the Motor Vehicle Owners' Right to Repair Act (H.R. 2048), would protect the rights of consumers to diagnose, service and repair their vehicle. H.R. 2048, which received bi-partisan support, was approved by the House Subcommittee on Commerce, Trade and Consumer Protection on May 25. Although Congress adjourned without taking further action, CEA will continue to fight for Right to Repair legislation during

the upcoming session of Congress.

CEA believes Americans should have the right to choose which new technologies are used in their vehicle, as well as the right to choose who installs these products. In turn, greater consumer choice and competition will drive more innovative products and lower prices, benefiting all Americans.

Right to Repair Receives Broad Support

CEA was joined by a diverse group of organizations supporting H.R. 2048, including the National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB), the Automotive Aftermarket Industry Association (AAIA), the Tire Industry Association (TIA) and the Coalition for Auto Repair Equality (CARE), which represents major companies in the automotive aftermarket. As supporters, CEA is asking manufacturers to divulge any proprietary information. Rather, CEA asks only for the bare minimum information needed for aftermarket manufacturers and independent repair shops to compete in the marketplace. H.R. 2048 offered the necessary protections for automobile companies' trade secrets and patents.

Right to Repair legislation is important for both the industry and consumers in order to promote greater consumer choice, lower prices and increase fair competition. For more information and how to contact your Congressman, visit <http://www.righttorepair.org/> or contact David Grossman at jgrossman@CEA.org.