

**NOVEMBER 10, 2005 SCHAKOWSKY SUPPORTS BILL TO GIVE CONSUMERS BETTER AND CHEAPER WAYS TO REPAIR THEIR VEHICLES**

**WASHINGTON, DC -** U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky, ranking member on the Subcommittee on Commerce, Trade, and Consumer Protection, today spoke in favor of a bill that would provide consumers with a choice in where they go to repair their cars in a hearing before the Subcommittee. H.R. 2048, the Motor Vehicle Owners' Right to Repair Act, would allow consumers to use independent repair shops to fix their vehicles, rather than relying solely on dealers who currently have a monopoly on the information technology necessary to repair those vehicles.

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**Representative Schakowsky's opening statement is below:**

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**Thank you, Chairman Stearns, for holding today's hearing on another important issue to consumers - whether the choice of where to take their cars for repairs is their own. □ I am glad that we are revisiting the technical challenges that currently stop consumers from using the shop around the corner and that we are taking another look at the Motor Vehicle Owners' Right to Repair Act, which would restore their right to choose where they want to take their business.□**

**Technological developments in car design and maintenance have made cars safer and more environmentally sound.□ The changes have truly been advances.□□ However, they have also created new obstacles for consumers and independent repair shops.□ Consumers have found that a simple repair may not be so simple after all.□ Even getting a diagnosis is more complicated than it was before and many have found that they cannot take their cars to the repair shop they have been using for years.□**

**Repair shops, for their part, are finding that they must refer customers to dealers for work they cannot do.□ It is not because the mechanics at the shop are not capable, but because they cannot get the information they need - or they cannot get the information they need in a timely fashion - to make the necessary repairs.□ So, unfortunately, many of our neighborhood mechanics have had to send good business elsewhere.□**

**I believe it is important to protect the trade secrets and intellectual property of auto manufacturers. □ The motor vehicle industry is the largest manufacturer in the country and their innovations help fuel the economy.□ However, I believe that information necessary to diagnose, service, and repair vehicles sold in the United States should be disclosed to car owners, repair shops, and the Federal Trade Commission. □ I believe a**

**balance between protecting the rights of manufactures and the rights of the consumer can be found and that H.R. 2048 is on the right track toward striking that balance.[] []**

**Some of the witnesses here today will report that information sharing is already occurring and that the automakers and independent repair shops have been working together voluntarily.[] That cooperation was initiated, in large part, by the late Senator Paul Wellstone's prodding, and is a positive change since this issue came to light a few years ago.[] However, there is still room for improvement.[]**

**I was glad to hear that from July to October, the stakeholders - many of them witnesses today - tried to work out an agreement on better information sharing.[] Despite your efforts, no accord was reached and consumers are the ones who will pay for the outstanding disputes.[] For me, ultimately, this is about the consumers - and eliminating any undo burden on them.[] If the industries involved cannot work out a solution, then I believe we do need to consider legislation.[] We need to ensure that the information provided to the car owners and independent repair shops is easily accessible, accurate, timely, and not priced out of reach.[]**

**Again, I look forward to hearing your ideas on this issue.[] I hope that we can come to a better understanding of the impasse so we can move forward on restoring consumers' choice of when it comes to mechanics who perform work on their cars.[]**