

August 29, 2024

The Honorable Jack Reed
Chairman
Committee on Armed Services
228 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roger Wicker
Ranking Member
Committee on Armed Services
228 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
Chair
Committee on Commerce, Science, and
Transportation
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Ted Cruz
Ranking Member
Committee on Commerce, Science, and
Transportation
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Reed, Chair Cantwell, Ranking Member Wicker and Ranking Member Cruz:

We, the undersigned organizations representing a cross-section of industry and interested stakeholders, are writing in strong support of Amdt. 2422 to S. 4638, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2025, filed by Sens. Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.) and Mike Braun (R-Ind.). The amendment is identical to the “Preventing Auto Recycling Theft” (PART) Act (S. 154), a bipartisan bill to combat the growing national problem of catalytic converter theft. This bill gives law enforcement additional tools to fight catalytic converter theft which has risen by nearly 900% between 2019 and 2023.¹

As you may be aware, catalytic converters are being stolen at increasingly higher rates because they contain valuable metals, such as rhodium, platinum and palladium. Thieves can easily steal catalytic converters from vehicles, and since they are not readily traceable, there is a lucrative market for these stolen parts. These thefts are costing millions of dollars to businesses and vehicle owners alike. In addition, for consumers, replacing a catalytic converter is costly and often difficult due to the part’s skyrocketing demand and supply chain shortages.

The urgency of addressing catalytic converters thefts has risen as these thefts have increasingly turned violent, with many victims sustaining injuries and even losing their lives when confronting thieves. Recently, in a highly publicized tragedy, 37-year-old soap opera actor Johnny Wactor lost his life after confronting thieves stealing his converter.² Many such dangerous events have occurred across the country including a Harris County (Texas) Sheriff Deputy Darren Almendarez who was shot and killed while off duty after he confronted thieves in a grocery store parking lot in the middle of the day.³

The lack of traceable identifying marks on a catalytic converter allows criminals to launder the parts by selling to local middlemen, often referred to as “core buyers,” who buy stolen parts to then sell to scrap yards or smelters. Stolen catalytic converters can garner anywhere up to \$350 each on the black market, while the replacement cost to vehicle owners can be as high as \$2,500. Repair costs are often higher because thieves regularly damage other parts of the vehicle when removing the catalytic converter.

¹ “Catalytic Converter Thefts Decline As Laws Tighten, Scrap Metal Prices Weaken” *Bumper*, Dec. 11, 2023, <https://www.bumper.com/vin-lookup/catalytic-converter-theft-state-rankings/>

² “Johnny Wactor, 'General Hospital' actor, fatally shot in L.A.” *NBC News*, May 26, 2024 <https://www.nbcnews.com/pop-culture/tv/johnny-wactor-general-hospital-actor-fatally-shot-1-rcna154138>

³ “Off-Duty Texas Deputy Killed in Shootout With Suspected Catalytic Converter Thieves” *NBCDFW*, April 1, 2022 <https://www.nbcdfw.com/news/local/texas-news/texas-deputy-dies-in-shootout-with-suspected-catalytic-converter-thieves/2929620/>

The PART Act provides a national framework to help law enforcement combat rising catalytic converter theft. Because this crime frequently involves trafficking stolen parts across state lines, a federal framework is needed to aid the efforts of local law enforcement.⁴ The bill also provides that catalytic converter transactions are recorded and made readily accessible to law enforcement officials to ensure bad actors are caught within the chain of commerce.

Additionally, the legislation requires new vehicles to have unique, traceable identifying numbers stamped on catalytic converters at the time of assembly. It is important to clarify that S. 154 requires new vehicles to have a traceable identifying number stamped on the catalytic converter that is traceable back to the vehicle's VIN. Currently, unless a thief is caught in the act of stealing a catalytic converter, there is no way to tie the stolen part to a specific vehicle.

Parts marking is an effective deterrent to theft and a vital tool for prosecutors, as it ties a stolen catalytic converter back to a victim's vehicle.⁵ A 1998 Department of Transportation report analyzing the efficacy of vehicle parts marking laws concluded, "it appears that parts marking and other provisions of the 1984 and 1992 Acts have given the law enforcement community tools they can use to deter thefts, trace stolen vehicles and parts, and apprehend and convict thieves."⁶ A follow-up report commissioned by the Department of Justice corroborated this finding and went further by stating that "parts marking is cost-beneficial."⁷

According to law enforcement, marking catalytic converters would preserve their resources and give local law enforcement the tools they need to prosecute thieves while also acting as a theft deterrent. The bill also establishes a federal criminal penalty for the theft, sale, trafficking or known purchase of stolen catalytic converters of up to five years in jail.

The bipartisan PART Act provides local law enforcement the necessary support needed to combat rising and dangerous catalytic converter theft. While we strongly support this amendment, we believe it would be strengthened by the addition of these perfecting provisions linked below.⁸ The undersigned organizations urge you to vote YES on Amdt. 2422 to S. 4638 to address this growing national problem which is affecting consumers and small businesses alike. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

National Automobile Dealers Association
American Property Casualty Insurance Association
American Rental Association
American Truck Dealers
American Trucking Associations
Automotive Recyclers Association
CAR Coalition

⁴ "Justice Department Announces Takedown of Nationwide Catalytic Converter Theft Ring," *U.S. Department of Justice*, Nov. 2, 2022, <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/justice-department-announces-takedown-nationwide-catalytic-converter-theft-ring>

⁵ Vehicle parts marking was first enacted by Congress in the Motor Vehicle Theft Law Enforcement Act of 1984 [P.L. 98-547]. This law gave the Department of Transportation authority to prescribe by regulation a "vehicle theft prevention standard" which would require that manufacturers and importers of new passenger car models mark the major components of "high theft vehicles" with an identification number to help prevent their theft for "chop shop" operations. This program was expanded eight years later in the Anti-Car Theft Act of 1992 [P.L. 102-519]. See "Motor Vehicle Theft Prevention Statutes -- General Overview." *U.S. Department of Justice*, Jan. 17, 2020, <https://www.justice.gov/archives/jm/criminal-resource-manual-1359-motor-vehicle-theft-prevention-statutes-general-overview>

⁶ "Auto Theft and Recovery: Effects of the Anti Car Theft Act of 1992 and the Motor Vehicle Theft Law Enforcement Act of 1984." *National Highway Traffic Safety Administration*, July 1998
<https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/808761>

⁷ "Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Automobile Parts Marking and Anti-Theft Devices on Preventing Theft." *Abt Associates Inc.*, Sept. 2003, <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/208800.pdf>

⁸ "Proposed Coalition Amendments to the Preventing Auto Recycling Theft Act (H.R. 621/S. 154)." *NADA*, July 23, 2024, <https://www.nada.org/media/15109/download?inline>

Elite Catering & Event Professionals
International Association of Chiefs of Police
Major Cities Chiefs Association
Major County Sheriffs of America
NAFA Fleet Management Association
National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians
National Association of Mutual Insurance Companies
National Auto Auction Association
National Automatic Merchandising Association
National Consumer League
National District Attorneys Association
National Insurance Crime Bureau
National Private Truck Council
National RV Dealers Association
National Salvage Vehicle Reporting Program
National Sheriffs' Association
National Tank Truck Carriers
NTEA – The Work Truck Association
Truck Renting and Leasing Association
UPS

Alaska Trucking Association
Arizona Automobile Dealers Association
Arkansas Automobile Dealers Association
Austin Automobile Dealers Association
Auto Dealers Association of Mega Milwaukee
Automobile Dealers Association of Alabama
Automobile Dealers Association of Indiana
Automobile Dealers Association of Kansas City
Automobile Dealers Association of North Dakota
California New Car Dealers Association
California Trucking Association
Chicago Automobile Trade Association
Colorado Automobile Dealers Association
Colorado Motor Carriers Association
Connecticut Automotive Retailers Association
Delaware Automobile and Truck Dealers' Association
Detroit Auto Dealers Association
Florida Automobile Dealers Association
Georgia Automobile Dealers Association
Georgia Motor Trucking Association
Greater Cincinnati Automobile Dealers Association
Greater Cleveland Automobile Dealers' Association
Greater Los Angeles New Car Dealers Association
Greater New York Automobile Dealers Association
Hawaii Automobile Dealers Association
Idaho Automobile Dealers Association
Idaho Trucking Association
Illinois Automobile Dealers Association
Illinois Trucking Association
Indiana Motor Truck Association

Iowa Automobile Dealers Association
Iowa Motor Truck Association
Kansas Automobile Dealers Association
Kentucky Automobile Dealers Association
Kentucky Trucking Association
Louisiana Automobile Dealers Association
Maine Automobile Dealers Association
Maine Motor Transport Association
Maryland Automobile Dealers Association
Maryland Motor Truck Association
Massachusetts State Automobile Dealers Association
Michigan Automobile Dealers Association
Minnesota Auto Dealers Association
Mississippi Automobile Dealers Association
Mississippi Trucking Association
Missouri Automobile Dealers Association
Missouri Trucking Association
Montana Automobile Dealers Association
Montana Trucking Association
Motor Transport Association of Connecticut
Nebraska New Car & Truck Dealers Association
Nevada Franchised Auto Dealers Association
Nevada Trucking Association
New Car Dealers Association San Diego County
New Car Dealers of Utah
New Hampshire Automobile Dealers Association
New Jersey Coalition of Automotive Retailers
New Jersey Motor Truck Association
New Mexico Automotive Dealers Association
New Mexico Trucking Association
New York State Automobile Dealers Association
North Carolina Automobile Dealers Association
North Dakota Motor Carriers Association
Ohio Automobile Dealers Association
Oklahoma Automobile Dealers Association
Oklahoma Trucking Association
Oregon Auto Dealers Association
Oregon Trucking Association
Pennsylvania Automotive Association
Pennsylvania Motor Truck Association
Rhode Island Automobile Dealers Association
Rhode Island Trucking Association
Rochester Automobile Dealers Association
South Carolina Automobile Dealers Association
South Carolina Trucking Association
South Dakota Auto Dealers Association
South Dakota Trucking Association
Tennessee Automotive Association
Tennessee Trucking Association
Texas Automobile Dealers Association
Texas Trucking Association

Trucking Association of Massachusetts
Trucking Association of New York
Utah Trucking Association
Vermont Vehicle and Automotive Distributors Association
Virginia Automobile Dealers Association
Virginia Trucking Association
Washington Area New Automobile Dealers Association
Washington State Auto Dealers Association
Washington Trucking Associations
West Virginia Automobile Dealers Association
Wisconsin Automobile & Truck Dealers Association
Wyoming Automobile Dealers Association