

# ABAC NEWS

The Official Newsletter of the Auto Body Association of Connecticut

MAY - JUNE 2015

## ABAC Welcomes SCRS Executive Director Aaron Schulenburg; Fiat Chrysler Automobiles (FCA) Certification Program at Quarterly Meeting

ABAC President Tony Ferraiolo welcomed over 90 members, managers and guests to the ABAC meeting held at the Chowder Pot Restaurant in Hartford on May 12<sup>th</sup>.

Going over the agenda for the evening, besides our two guest speakers, Tony said we would be voting to approve the new ABAC Bylaws and the Annual Election of Officers.

Tony welcomed 2 new ABAC Board of Directors; Tony Cavallaro Jr. from Airport Road Auto Body and Joe Miano from Friendly Auto Body.

Ferraiolo mentioned the ABAC had a table at the front of the room supplied with all types of information to help keep shop owners involved and educated. ***“Anything on this table is for you to take with you. We have information and guidelines to help you. You really need to have several copies of the Connecticut Appraisers Regulations in your shop. You need to look at it, make copies, and give copies to your customers. If you get a customer who comes in and they were told they had to bring their car to get an estimate somewhere, give them a copy of this and tell them that in the Regulations it states that no appraisers can tell them where to take their vehicle,”*** says Ferraiolo. Under The Connecticut Insurance Department’s **“Conduct of Motor Vehicle Physical Damage Appraisers” Sec. 38a-790-6; Appraiser not to request specified shop, clearly states “No appraiser shall request that appraisals or repairs be made in a specified repair shop or shops.”** Tony continues, ***“So give that to your customer and if their insurance company tells them otherwise, let your customer know that the appraiser is in violation of the regulations and encourage them to put in a complaint with the Department of Insurance.”***



SCRS Executive Director  
Aaron Schulenburg

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The ABAC then recognized several new members:

- **Gates GMC Nissan Buick – North Windham**
- **Chris' Auto Clinic – Plainville**
- **Farmington Auto Park – Plainville**
- **Suzio Insurance Center – Meriden**
- **Jackson Chevrolet – Middletown**

All of the ABAC Sponsors, Corporate Sponsors, ABAC News Sponsors and Meeting Sponsors are now recognized by being projected on a large screen at every ABAC meeting. Says Ferraiolo, ***"The ABAC wants to honor our sponsors at every event that the ABAC has and what better way than to put them on display for everyone to see? We really appreciate the support that we receive from these valuable vendors and the ABAC wants to make sure that everyone supports them by using their services. It is very important and very vital to the continued success of the ABAC going forward."***

The meeting sponsors for the evening were:

- **Bald Hill Dodge-Chrysler-Jeep & Kia**
  - **Matt Jarvis – Parts Director**
  - **Don Cushing – Wholesale Manager**
  - **Anthony Pickett – Sales/Delivery**
  - **Mike Picerno – Delivery**
- **Enterprise-Rent-A-Car**
- **Paint World**
- **Kent Automotive**



At this time, President Ferraiolo introduced our first guest speaker, **John Hughes, Collision Repair Specialist; Technical Service Operations Mopar Brand**. Joining Mr. Hughes was **Mark Engelsdorfer, Mopar Service Parts & Customer Care Director – Collision Portfolio**, both representing **Fiat Chrysler Automobiles U.S. (FCA)**

Hughes began his presentation with information about the Mopar website, [www.moparrepairconnection.com](http://www.moparrepairconnection.com). This site is your one stop for information on repairing Fiat Chrysler automobiles with up to date areas regarding Collision, Mechanical and Powertrain. For Collision Shops you can find body repair manuals, Corporate Position statements and technical repair articles.

Hughes then gave us info about becoming a Certified Collision Repair Shop. The FCA Recognized Collision Repair Facility Program provides customers with a repair provider choice that is Certified. The unique



**John Hughes - FCA**

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## To Certify or Not to Certify? That is the Question!



The big buzz out in the industry today is OEM Certified Repair Programs. Just what we need! More expense for equipment and training that no one wants to fairly compensate us for. Don't get me wrong, I'm a firm believer in ongoing training, equipment updating and information from the vehicle manufacturer to properly repair vehicles. What I don't like is another third-party telling me what training and certification programs I need to get involved in.

That being said, why do we need a third party company, instead of the manufacturer of the vehicle, to tell us that we meet the minimum standards required to perform certain vehicle repairs? Do these certified repair facilities (or whatever they are going to refer to them as) only use parts from that vehicle manufacturer? That makes sense. Since the vehicle manufacturer wants shops certified, shouldn't you be following all OEM procedures and use parts that are designed and built for that particular vehicle?

Now **THESE** are the questions I'm looking to get answered. You should be looking at these programs and asking the questions that you don't understand. The time is **NOW** for you to look at the future of your businesses.

The ABAC plans to meet with these certifying companies and ask questions. We will inform our membership of what we find. Hopefully, we will get the information we need to make informed business decisions on the future of our businesses. In the meantime, research what OEM programs you might be interested in and do your homework. Contact the dealer you purchase parts from to get information on their Certified Repair Programs. I don't think that this is just a phase, I believe this is a reality, take it seriously! The future of your business is in question. You can't think that you are above this trend, that you don't need to look into these programs. **The future is NOW.** Don't let other people make decisions that influence your shop's future. Get educated, informed and make decisions on what you know your shop needs to succeed in this industry.

Certified Repair shops are what most manufacturers are looking into for various reasons, among which is proper repair to vehicles to ensure proper deployment of vehicle safety systems. With the use of more and more lightweight materials, vehicle repair is changing almost weekly. Your technicians need the most up-to-date information and training to perform proper repairs. Don't let other people make decisions that **YOU** are going to live with for your business. Get involved in what's going on. I can't stress enough that your livelihood is going to be affected.

On another note; please **support the State Technical Schools.** They are a great place to find technicians that want to be in our automotive collision repair industry. They are already used to learning the trade. They will transcend into ongoing training and education without resistance.

I hope to have more information for all of you at our September Membership Meeting which will be sponsored by Richard Chevrolet and held at the Country House Restaurant in East Haven.

Have a great summer.

*Tony Ferraiolo*

President - Auto Body Association of Connecticut

**Here are the websites to companies that the OEM's are using for certification:**

Verifacts: [www.verifactsauto.com](http://www.verifactsauto.com)

Assured Performance Network: [www.assuredperformance.net](http://www.assuredperformance.net)

## You're Not Alone - Attorney John Parese



I recently finished a car accident trial. First things first, I wasn't thrilled with the verdict. We won the case, but the number was not what my client and I were hoping for. It was a frustrating experience. My client was rear-ended while waiting for a vehicle in front of her to turn left. The at-fault driver denied fault, then blamed the crash on my client. He did this through his pleadings and later at deposition (both of which are required to be truthful, by the way). In fact, I asked the defendant at deposition if there were anything he could have done differently to avoid the crash and he said no, then proceeded to blame the whole thing on my client.

So here we have a total idiot, lying through his teeth, blaming a rear-end crash on my client, and an insurer (Liberty Mutual) denying fault and filing special defenses blaming the crash on my client. Great, I'm thinking, just wait till the jury hears all this!

Then minutes before the case is to start, Liberty Mutual's lawyer admits fault on behalf of his client. The issue of fault is taken away from the jury. Then, Liberty's lawyer gives his opening statement: "Ladies and gentlemen, I'm a meat and potatoes kind of guy. My client admits this crash was his fault. The only issue is how much money the plaintiff is looking for..."

Over my objections, the court endorsed Liberty's strategy, and prohibited me from introducing any evidence any of the prior judicial admissions or the myriad of false statements under oath. I was also prohibited from telling the jury about the timing of the last minute decision to admit fault. There was a point, however, when the defendant was sitting in the courtroom at the beginning of the trial. The jury had not come out yet. I was arguing with defense counsel about my right to call the defendant as a witness. The judge ruled, over strenuous objection, that I may call the defendant, but that my questions needed to be limited. Shortly after this ruling, the defendant disappeared. No joke. Just took off. He left his own trial so that I could not call him as a witness. Whether this was an orchestrated trial strategy, we'll never know. But, it goes to show you the lengths some will go to distort the truth.

Throughout the trial, a host of other distortions took place. Records were distorted, facts were twisted, and my client, a sincerely nice person, was made out to be a money grabbing liar. Every question of every witness from the defense had an air of contempt. Meanwhile, the court prohibited my ability to defend against these tactics and to tell the jury the real story. It was supremely frustrating. At the end of the case, the jury reached a verdict in our favor, but for much less money than was justified by the losses.

So how does this relate to the auto body industry? Well, first, it's fair to say that you're not alone. Trial lawyers are no stranger to inappropriate insurer games and tactics. I hope this story makes some of you feel a little better to know that we can get equally frustrated with how rigged the process can seem sometimes. Second, sometimes life just throws us curve balls – all of us. When that happens, we have to make our best of it and move on. And third and most importantly, we learn our best lessons from these kinds of events. We have to use them to make us stronger.

Enjoy your summer!

***John M. Parese, Esq. is a Partner with the law firm of Buckley & Wynne and serves as general counsel to the ABAC. Buckley & Wynne maintains offices in New Haven, Hartford and Stamford, and services clients throughout all of Connecticut. The opinions set forth in Attorney Parese's articles are for education and entertainment purposes only, and should not be construed as legal advice or legally binding. If you have any questions or concerns about the content of this or any of Attorney Parese's articles, you are encouraged to contact Attorney Parese directly.***

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program identifies collision repair operations that have all the critical tools, equipment, training, and facilities to properly repair FCA vehicles to original manufacturer specifications.

**Steps to Certification****1. Application - Registration**

Review the terms and conditions of participation and select the application option. Then, see the amount due and choose your form of payment.

**2. Business Information**

Enter key business information critical for KPI comparisons, program review and tracking.

**3. Business Capability Assessment**

This step provides the list of requirements and standards your shop must meet. The question and answer process allows you to assess your capabilities and create a business development plan, if necessary.

As you go through the process, you can assess whether or not you will be able to make the grade. If not, you can make any business improvements necessary before scheduling an onsite inspection-audit.

**4. Score & Evaluation**

The online system provides you with a score and illustrates any deficiencies in becoming Certified or Recognized. It is part of the ongoing business development process.

**5. On-Site Inspection-Audit**

When you are sure you can meet all of the requirements, the next step is to schedule an on-site inspection-audit. The inspector will tour your body shop and ensure proof of compliance with photos and documentation.

**6. Marketing & Promotion**

To ensure your shop gains value from Certification or Recognition, various marketing and promotional tools are available. Shops must upload images and logos to personalize the optional marketing materials.

**Gain a Competitive Advantage****Certification & Recognition Benefits:**

- Inclusion on the FCA Collision Assistance App available to every FCA Group vehicle owner (Release date: Fall 2014)
- Shop Locator - Provides visibility of Certified Shops to vehicle owners searching for a quality repair.
- Shop Marketing Material - Point of Purchase and signage differentiates Certified Shops from local competition.
- Leveraging the exclusive FCA Recognized status to promote and market your shop.
- Official Recognition by other OEM's leverages the same requirements and Certification process, saving you thousands.
- Business development process and feedback to ensure your shop continues to have what it takes to properly repair the new generation of FCA vehicles.
- Official FCA Recognized Signage for dealers and independent body shops.

**Inspected once and recognized by many OEM's!**

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Hughes and Engelsdorfer then fielded questions from attendees.

After a short break for dinner, Ferraiolo then welcomed several guests and members from the Western Chapter of the Alliance of Automotive Service Providers of Massachusetts. (AASP/MA) Joining us were:

- **Gary Cloutier – Cloots Auto Body**
- **Mike Boucher – Custom Auto Body**
- **Ed Nalewanski – Ed’s Auto Repair**
- **Don Vermette – Vermette Auto Body**
- **Dan Lamontagne – White Lightning Auto Body**



ABAC Legal Counsel, John Parese then brought members up to speed on the newly updated ABAC Bylaws. ***“These bylaws are now consistent with the way the organization is actually run, to modernize the bylaws to regulatory requirements and statutory requirements. So, what I would suggest is that we have a motion since the bylaws have been previously provided to everyone, as required by law, and I would ask for a motion to approve the now updated bylaws,”*** says Parese.

A motion was made by Bob Skrip to accept the bylaws and seconded by Bill Denya, approved unanimously and are now in place. The next order of business was the ABAC Election of Officers. Nominated and voted into office for another term were:

- **Tony Ferraiolo – A&R Body Specialty – President**
- **Ed Lupinek – Eddie’s Auto Body – Vice-President**
- **Mark Wilkowski – Stanley’s Auto Body - Secretary**
- **Mike Wilkowski – Stanley’s Auto Body – Treasurer**

Tony mentioned that he would not be able to do the work that has been done with the success he has had without the continued support and efforts of his valued Board of Directors. Please see the back page of this newsletter for a list of the Board.

Tony then welcomed our next guest speaker for the evening, Aaron Schulenburg, Executive Director for Society of Collision Repair Specialists (SCRS). Aaron is a great industry friend and advocate for organizations such as the ABAC.

Says Schulenburg, ***“It’s an amazing opportunity to be here and join all of you this evening. One of my favorite parts of my job is when I get to come out and meet with people in different states and talk a little bit about what’s going on in the industry and talk with different groups and what they’re facing locally. It gives us the opportunity to gain insight to what’s going on across the country.”***

Aaron covered the education that SCRS offers to industry professionals, ***“The two ways that we do education and information are through two arms of programs that we’ve developed; Repairer Driven News and Repairer Driven Education, all of it with a focus on repairers. And that is what is always driving our efforts and initiatives.”***

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Mr. Schulenburg is the type of guest speaker that the Auto Body Association invites to meetings so that shop owners and managers have the opportunity to learn.

Here's a small sampling about SCRS taken from their website:

**ABOUT SCRS**

Through our direct members and affiliate associations, SCRS proudly represents over 6,000 collision repair businesses and 58,500 specialized professionals who work to repair collision-damaged vehicles. Since 1982, the Society of Collision Repair Specialists (SCRS) has been the largest national trade association solely representing and dedicated to the hardworking collision repair facilities across North America. SCRS was founded with the principles that through working together, collision repair facilities could inspire positive advancement in our industry. Since its formation, SCRS has provided repairers with an audible voice, a strong presence and an extensive grassroots network of industry professionals who strive to better our trade.

**MISSION**

To educate, inform and represent the collision repair professional in all aspects of the industry

**VISION**

To promote, support and encourage exemplary businesses committed to the future of the collision repair industry, while providing the visibility and leadership needed to raise the professional image of the industry and advance the business conditions of those whom we represent.

There was so much more covered in Aaron's presentation and this article is just a tidbit of the knowledge that members gained at our recent meeting. Give yourself and your business a great opportunity to become more successful. Join the ABAC and get yourself on the path to becoming more profitable using the knowledge gained at our meetings and through direct networking with your peers!

**Information, education, dedication.....  
that is what the Auto Body Association of Connecticut is all about!**



## Takata Air Bag Recall Expands to 34 Million Vehicles

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U.S. Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx announced that at the Department's insistence, air bag manufacturer Takata has acknowledged that a defect exists in its air bag inflators. Takata has agreed to a national recall of certain types of driver and passenger side air bag inflators. These inflators were made with a propellant that can degrade over time and has led to ruptures that have been blamed for six deaths worldwide. The action expands the number of vehicles to be recalled for defective Takata inflators to nearly 34 million.

Secretary Foxx also announced that the Department's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) issued a Consent Order to Takata. The Consent Order requires the company to cooperate in all future regulatory actions that NHTSA undertakes in its ongoing investigation and oversight of Takata. In addition, NHTSA announced its intent to begin a formal legal process to organize and prioritize the replacement of defective Takata inflators under the agency's legal authority.

The actions expand regional recalls of Takata passenger-side inflators, currently limited to areas of high absolute humidity, to nationwide recalls involving more than 16 million vehicles. They also expand the current nationwide recall of driver-side inflators to more than 17 million vehicles. It's anticipated that the remedy of vehicles will be prioritized based upon risk, with the vehicles that present the greatest risk in terms of age and geographic location to be serviced first.

Shigehisa Takada, Chairman & CEO of Takata Corporation, stated, "We are pleased to have reached this agreement with NHTSA, which presents a clear path forward to advancing safety and restoring the trust of automakers and the driving public. We have worked extensively with NHTSA and our automaker customers over the past year to collect and analyze a multitude of testing data in an effort to support actions that work for all parties and, most importantly, advance driver safety. We are committed to continuing to work closely with NHTSA and our automaker customers to do everything we can to advance the safety of drivers."

Specific information on the recall is available at [NHTSA's microsite on Takata recalls](#).

AAA supports the expansion of the recall that it believes should have happened sooner. "AAA supports the over-due announcement that Takata has agreed to a national recall of driver and passenger side air bag inflators. Since late last year AAA has fully supported NHTSA's call for a national recall of affected Takata air bags beyond the limited high-humidity areas where a recall has focused until today."

Source: [www.collisionweek.com](http://www.collisionweek.com)

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***For more information contact: Dave @ 860-227-0653***

# ABAC Shop of the Month

## T&J Auto Body - East Hartford

T&J Auto Body in East Hartford Connecticut first opened their doors in 1967 by Tom Conran Sr. and his business partner John Hamlin. The business ran successfully for many years and in 1990 Hamlin retired. At this point Conran Sr. sold the business to his son, Tom Conran Jr. along with the elder Conran's nephews, Mike & Tim Walsh. These 3 have been running the business since 1990 and Tom Sr. still comes to work every day! (At 75 years old, he was nearby sanding a fender as I was conducting this interview!)



T&J Auto Body has a staff of 21 employees in their 12,000 Sq. ft. building. They have 2 downdraft booths, 6 car liners and all the equipment that is required to be a qualified Collision Center. T&J Auto Body is a local family owned and operated auto body business with over 45 years of experience repairing all makes and models of cars, SUV's, and light trucks (Honda repair specialists).

From their website: "We believe that customer service is our number one priority and back this up through our detailed pre-&-post repair process, our free local shuttle service. **Expertise** makes the difference when you need people who **know, care about,** and are **dedicated to the integrity** of your automobile and **100% satisfaction.**"



You can contact T&J Auto Body:

36 Jencks Street  
East Hartford, CT 06108

Phone (860) 528-9337 Fax (860)  
289-6655

Email: [info@tandjautobody.com](mailto:info@tandjautobody.com)

Website: [www.tandjautobody.com](http://www.tandjautobody.com)



## Just My Take...

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**By Steve Sbalcio – Dean Autoworks**

Look outside the front door of your repair shop. How many empty parking spots do you see?

If the answer is equivalent to about 40% that is most likely a sign that your business is not doing a good job of customer retention. It may be a difficult fact to face but those empty parking places are a harsh reality of problems that inevitably lie within the walls of your business. A business that you have spent many long hours and sacrifice to make successful over the years. The first impressions your customers are exposed to, can make or break your potential business relationship with them. Let's explore some key components to your business that may have you retooling your current business practices to bring back those customers to a place they were once happy and more importantly, satisfied.

You can never judge a book by its cover. We have uttered those words at some point in our life, but it has a dual meaning. Before I started in the service part of the auto industry I began my career in sales. An older disheveled gentleman approached a vehicle outside the Lincoln Mercury dealership where I was employed. Every salesman ran the other way leaving me standing alone to handle what was perceived by the other members of the sales staff as a tire kicker. To make a long story short, the customer ended up being a millionaire boat builder and purchased 6 brand new Lincoln Town cars from me that afternoon. I obviously had the last laugh but also had one of the best lessons of my life. Never to judge a book by its cover. Be attentive to the customer's needs regardless of their appearance. The same can be said of the appearance to your establishment from the exterior to the office area. Keep it neat and clean at all times. Your customer will be judging, the proverbial book by its cover, you can count on it. Don't let your customer see a dirty or disorganized office or waiting area. They are sure to think this is the way you will handle them and their vehicle's repair. Let's not even discuss what your customers who drive luxury cars will think when they see a greasy counter or office windows that have years of grime on them. They may have a few general questions about your services but when it comes to making an actual appointment, well.. don't hold your breath. Customers today will check you out thoroughly before they commit to services performed by your establishment.

Next don't skimp on training your employees in customer relations. The first contact a customer will have is sure to be over the phone. They can't see your smile, but make no mistake about it, the customer can tell if the person answering the phone is being bothered by the call or eager to please by the tone in their voice. If your employees answer the phone with a smile on their face, your customers will sense their call is important and so is their business. When a customer comes into the office to make an appointment or for an impromptu estimate, greet them immediately. If they are the second person inside and you are currently assisting another customer, acknowledge their presence. Happy customers will always refer others.

Your appearance and the appearance that your employees exhibit will also leave a lasting impression on your customers. You don't have to spend a fortune on uniforms, although they would make for the best impression. Keep your employees in the same neat clean t-shirt with your logo and replace them frequently. No holes or stains except from the current days' work should be tolerated. Keep those employees looking like they own the place.

Customer follow-up is key in making your customers feel appreciated and that the repair was completed to their satisfaction. I know, I know, who has the time for that type of service? Well the answer is make the time or better yet hire a service to do it for you. There are services that will give it a personal touch or you may opt for a digital follow up program.

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Whatever the case this should not even be negotiable and if you think it is maybe you should put a lawn chair in one of those empty parking places and ponder it a little harder. From where the customer sits, if your online reviews are bad or you don't send email reminders you will probably lose them to someone who offers the same services. Those companies usually email promotional discounts to drive traffic back into your shop continuously. I can attest to their effectiveness. Demandforce is a topnotch nationwide company with a proven track record in customer retention; check them out on the web.

When their vehicle is complete, call them promptly. Do not make them call you to ask if their vehicle is finished. They have places to be other than stuck home waiting for your call. If you can manage free loaner vehicles, even better. My experience is as long as it is clean and full of gas, they will not feel confined to their home or place of business. Offer free rides home and delivery after their vehicle is completed. This will undoubtedly create a raving fan of your business and a loyal customer that will spread the word that at your shop they come first.

Your shop might have the most talented employees in the business. But if they are standing around with little or nothing to do they may soon be someone else's talented employees.

Make 2015 the year that customer retention and referrals becomes your businesses priority. When you're busy everyone is happy, tired but happy.

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## N.Y. Bill Stripping Insurer Voice on Auto Body Parts Vendor Passes Committee

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May 19, 2015 | [Associations](#) | [Insurance](#) | [Legal](#)

A New York bill banning insurers from requiring a certain method or vendor be used to obtain collision repair parts — which would, for example, kill State Farm's requirement of PartsTrader — passed out of the New York Assembly Insurance Committee on Tuesday.

Assembly Bill 6684 is very short, adding to the state law barring insurers from requiring a certain shop that underwriters also can't "require a repair facility to use a specific vendor or process for the procurement of parts or other materials necessary for the repair of a motor vehicle."

That's it. The list of 32 sponsors' surnames is longer — which could be a good sign for collision repairers. The bill was sent to the Assembly Insurance Committee in late March and passed 17-7 Tuesday, according to a staffer for committee Chairman Kevin Cahill, a Democrat. The bill now goes to the Code Committee.

A legislative memo accompanying it describes a desire to cut down on non-OEM parts and out-of-state orders and notes that insurers "have been directing auto repair businesses to procure their parts from an online source and will only reimburse the repair shop if they do so."

The memo also says such online sources only yield the cheapest part, which seems incorrect and possibly was describing insurers requiring the cheapest part rather than a parts search engine with one result.

"These replacement parts are most often not Original Equipment Manufactured (OEM) parts and therefore are of sub-quality and not up to the most stringent safety standards," the memo states.

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**ABAC OFFICERS 2015**

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A&R Body Specialty - Wallingford

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A&R Auto Body - Torrington

**RANDY SERKEY**  
A&R Auto Body - Torrington

**JOHN WELSH**  
Oxford Automotive - Oxford

**MIKE WALSH**  
T&J Auto Body - East Hartford

**WILLIAM ROMANIELLO**  
Legislative Director

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"This bill simply allows auto repair shops to continue to procure replacement parts from local suppliers and to ensure that these parts are of OEM quality."

A companion bill, Senate Bill 1207, has been sent to the Senate Insurance Committee but has sat there since January.

The New York Legislature adjourns in mid-June, so the bills probably don't have much chance of passing this half of the session, but they will still be in play when it reconvenes in 2016.

Similar bills filed last legislative session sat in the Assembly but did move from the Senate Insurance Committee to the Rules Committee at the very end of the 2013-14 session.

The bill is supported by the New York State Collision Technicians Association and Long Island Auto Body Repairman's Association. It was also backed by the Automotive Recyclers Association of New York.

Source: [www.repairerdrivenews.com](http://www.repairerdrivenews.com)

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### Gold Level

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**Dodge Chrysler Jeep & Kia**

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