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Contact: [Willem Rijkssen](#)
(202) 828-7139

AIA VOICES SUPPORT FOR ACCESS TO REPAIR PARTS ACT

WASHINGTON, D.C., June 26, 2009 – The American Insurance Association (AIA), expressed support for legislation introduced today that would amend federal patent law and allow for high-quality, lower-cost alternative collision replacement parts to be used for vehicle repairs. The “Access to Repair Parts Act,” was simultaneously introduced by Rep. Zoe Lofgren (D-CA) in the U.S. House of Representatives and by Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) in the Senate, would preserve competition in the automotive replacement parts market by providing options for budget conscious consumers.

“Aftermarket parts competition affords consumers a savings of up to \$1.5 billion per year,” stated Melissa Shelk, AIA vice president of federal affairs. “Increasing competition will reduce repair costs to the benefit of consumers’ wallets,” added Shelk.

According to research, the prices of crash parts sold by car companies fall by more than 8 percent when a competitive alternative exists, with the alternative part then priced an additional 26 percent below this reduced car company price.

The legislation is necessary because car companies have obtained an increasing number of design patents on visible crash parts, attempting to block competitors from producing affordable alternatives. New research suggests that several characteristics of the market for crash parts grant the car companies an unusual ability and incentive to use design patents to raise prices and harm consumers.

“It’s no secret that consumers are currently facing difficult economic times,” said Shelk. “Let’s do what we can to reduce repair costs for America’s drivers,” concluded Shelk.

AIA, a member of the Quality Parts Coalition, has been working alongside fellow “repair clause” advocates, which include a growing roster of consumer and senior citizen advocates and representatives of the insurance and independent parts industry, to secure this permanent legislative change to U.S. design patent law. For more information about the Quality Parts Coalition, visit www.qualitypartscoalition.com.

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The American Insurance Association represents approximately 350 major insurance companies that provide all lines of property and casualty insurance and write more than \$123 billion annually in premiums. The association is headquartered in Washington, D.C. and has representatives in every state. All AIA press releases are available at www.aiadc.org.