

The Official Newsletter of the Auto Body Association of Connecticut

BACK  
TO  
BASICS



First of a 4 Part Series Presentation  
Sponsored by Albert Kemperle

**“In Unity There is Strength; In Knowledge There is Power”**

**Your Car, Your Choice** - Find us at [www.abaconn.org](http://www.abaconn.org)

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**AUTO BODY ASSOCIATION OF CONNECTICUT**

# ABAC President's Message

## Bob Amendola

### The Future of Our Everchanging Industry



Despite all of the growth and advancements we've seen throughout the years within our industry, one thing remains certain: change is inevitable. If you do not proactively change with it, you will be left behind. The investment in the future is not just about technology or equipment. Most importantly, it is about investing in people, our future technicians, parts managers, estimators etc. If you are not paying your people a competitive wage and benefits, and investing in their skills with continuous training, then you are

aging your business out. I understand all of the above requires money. Therefore, it's time to stop accepting short pays and absorbing costs.

The inability or really the unwillingness of insurance companies to properly indemnify a loss leaves us with three choices:

- Charge the customer the difference
- Litigate the short-pay in small claims court
- Lose money

The decision is yours to make in your business, but the third choice is not sustainable. In our business, we have an honest conversation with each of our customers at the first point of contact regarding the potential for additional out-of-pocket expenses.

By doing so, the customer is informed and can decide whether they can or would like to proceed with repairing their vehicle at our shop. It's worth noting that the number of customers who have to walk away at that point are far less than we worried there would be. In cases of claimants, we typically will pursue the deficiency in small claims court instead of charging the customer. However, for insureds, they are responsible for the difference. We will not take those files to small claims court. Option 3 is not an option in our business. We no longer absorb a deficiency. What other industry do you know of that would let someone else determine their pricing and worth? It's time to step up and correct this. With that said, I've personally never felt better about the state of our industry. I've spoken with so many of our members who are saying "enough is enough!"

I encourage you all to take a moment and do a bit of self-evaluation. If you have had enough and want to make a change, start today. One step at a time. Be the most positive person you can be and lead by example.

Sincerely,

*Bob Amendola*

Autoworks of Westville - President - Auto Body Association of Connecticut  
Autoworksofwestville@gmail.com

## Platt Technical High School Career Fair April 23, 2025

Platt students are job ready and skilled in their trades. Grow your workforce with qualified students in Automotive Technology, Carpentry, Automotive Collision Repair, Culinary, Electrical, Hairdressing, HVAC, Information Technology, Mechatronics Robotics & Automation, Plumbing & Heating, PMET, and Architecture

Hire Students for Trade Positions through the  
CTECS Work Based Learning Program.  
CTEC students 16 and older are eligible to work in  
all trades including high-hazards trades



**April 23, 2025**

11:15-12:15 Buffet

12:22-1:12 Seniors

1:15-2:05 Juniors



600 Orange Ave. Milford CT

**For Registration scan the QR code  
or use this [link](#) by 4/9/25**



**Students participating in Work Based Learning are able to go to work during the school day while in their Trade Cycles. Students can also work after school or during breaks if needed. Please see the [CTECS WBL Page](#) and the [Platt Technical High School Website](#) for more information.**

## 'Back to the Basics' Educational Presentation Featured at Recent ABAC Meeting

The most recent Quarterly Meeting of the Auto Body Association of Connecticut was held this past March 11<sup>th</sup>, 2025, at the Sheraton Hartford South Hotel in Rocky Hill.

Presiding over this meeting, ABAC President, Bob Amendola, welcomed everyone to the meeting thanking everyone for putting aside time to attend and talked of the night's agenda.

Bob then announced the Sponsors for the evening:

### Primary Sponsor

*Albert Kemperle Auto Paint, Body & Equipment  
Regional Manager - David Esposito*

*CT, MA, NY Sales Team*

*Chris Masi*

*Brendan Gallagher*

*CT, MA, NY Technical Team*

*Cesar Soto*

*Brandon Wooley*

*John Japs*

*East Coast Business Development Services*

*Brain Higgins*



### Co-Sponsors:

*eFireX*

*Mike Warson, VP of Sales*



*North American Bancard*

*Greg Tino - National Merchant Service Manager*

# North

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Said Amendola, *"These ABAC meetings would not be as successful as they are without the direct contributions from our sponsors. So, a big thank you to them."*

*"As I also do at every meeting, I again want to sincerely thank all our ABAC Corporate Sponsors and our ABAC News Supporting Advertisers. They have all made a financial commitment to support YOUR Auto Body Association of Connecticut. In return we'd like to ask all our members to remember to Support Those Who Support You,"* said Bob. *"Buckley Wynne and Parese and Mauro Motors are our Platinum Sponsors of the ABAC News Advertisers Directory as well as Bald Hill Dodge Chrysler Jeep Kia who is our Gold Sponsor of our Directory,"* he continued.

Speaking on the most recent edition of the ABAC News, which discussed 'Educating Your Customers on the Realities of the Repair Industry', Bob said, *"In our shop, we made a decision a long time ago. It was 2017 that we started litigating our third-party files and it brought a tremendous amount of respect from the insurance companies that we were charging; taking them to court and then ultimately with them having to pay. Then last year with National General, which is a great company, and they miraculously realized that we're much cheaper than attorneys and now this year State Farm is our pet project and we're already starting to see some results from that. Think about that!"*

Bob then brought up Tony Ferraiolo to speak to everyone. *"Last month in the ABAC News there were some great articles with me, Bob McSherry of Noth Haven Auto Body and even the previous edition with George Atwood of Atwood's Auto Appearance on getting your customer involved and the different procedures we all use,"* said Ferraiolo.

*The time has come in this industry, and we are being pushed into it by insurance companies. Shop owners need to run their businesses more like a service department and realize who your customer is. Take care of your customer and know that there are challenges associated with it. I'm not going to say that tomorrow we're back under complete control, but there must be a solution to what's going on up there. (with insurers) If a bully takes your lunch money every day, they are going to continue to do it. "What are you going to do about it" is the attitude of a lot of these insurers now. So, you really must start thinking about litigation or arbitration that is well implemented here because a lot of times those third-party customers of yours can get reimbursed if they push. File litigation and I'm sure our ABAC Legal Counsel John can attest to the problems of first party and third party,"* he continued.



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President Bob then introduced our first presenter of the evening which was **North American Bancard**.

# North

They were represented by **Greg Tino - National Merchant Service Manager** who announced, ***“North American Bancard is now ‘North.’ A new brand with a shorter, simpler name, yes, but those five letters stand for much more. We’ve been a payment technology leader since 1992. We’ve come a very long way over those 30+ years — we’ve grown, we’ve innovated, we’ve changed the way payments work. We wanted a name that spoke to that evolution, a brand that elevates awareness of who we are today.”***

***“North is a memorable name. It’s also a direction — upward, onward. It speaks to exploration, adventure, and limitless possibility. We want to inspire people. Let everyone know who we are and what our mission is: To build the largest portfolio of payment and business management tools, helping our partners and merchants win in their industries,”*** said Greg

The way people pay has changed. Consumers now have more payment options than ever, and their choices are reshaping the entire industry. As a result, payment service providers are a huge part of everyday life. We want to continue to lead that conversation. So, this is the new North, a brand with an identity that stands for the future of financial tech, for the modern, forward-looking company that we are and always have been.

Our next presenter was **eFireX who was represented by Mike Warson, VP of Sales**.



With the rise of devices powered by lithium batteries, fire safety challenges continue to evolve.

eFireX offers all natural Lithium Battery fire extinguishers and offers reliable protection against all other classifications of fires.

- ALL LITHIUM BATTERY TYPES • ECO-FRIENDLY & SAFE
- FAST ACTING SUPPRESSION • SIMPLE & EASY TO USE



E-FireX is leading the way in developing advanced, environmentally friendly solutions to these new risks.

Their innovative approach enhances fire safety compliance across multiple industries and sets new standards for integrating eco-conscious practices in fire suppression technologies.

This proactive stance is crucial for protecting assets, people, and the environment, making E-FireX a key player in shaping the future of fire safety.

Mike gave a great in-depth presentation to all in attendance followed by questions and participation from attendees.

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After dinner, President Bob introduced our featured presenter for this meeting and our main sponsor. **Albert Kemperle Auto Paint, Body & Equipment represented by Regional Manager - David Esposito who took to the podium to present 'Back to The Basics.'**

***The agenda for the presentation:***

- ***Our Changing Market***
- ***Benchmarks***
- ***Knowing Your Numbers***
- ***CT Shop Comparisons***
- ***Ways To Increase Revenue***
- ***Hand Out Information***
- ***Local Classes***
- ***Contacting Your Manufacturer***



David Esposito  
Regional Manager

***This was the first of 4 educational classes that will be sponsored by Albert Kemperle and presented by David Esposito and featured speakers for the Auto Body Association of Connecticut.***

***Highlights:***

- \*The 2025 Body Shop Benchmarks provided to you are based on averages across the country.
- \*The overall goal of this meeting is to make you start thinking about your numbers.
- \*These KPI's can help you build goals and forecast your business. (Key Performance Indicators)
- \*Each paint manufacturer uses a similar set of KPI's

***"I would recommend working with your local distributor or manufacturer to help you understand and track your information,"*** said Esposito.

Topics discussed:

- ***Our Changing Market - New Way/Old Way***
- ***How does the industry stand nationally?***
- ***Who's growing?***
- ***Industry Segments?***
- ***Industry Stats?***
- ***Changing Markets?***
- ***Knowing Your Numbers and WHY That is Important?***
- ***Sales Mix***

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- ***Benchmarks***
- ***Production Floor - Shop Allocation of Floor Space***
- ***How Do We Compare?***
- ***Revenue Increases***
- ***Upcoming Training Classes - Business Support***

The ABAC would like to thank David Esposito and Albert Kemperle not only their support but for the outstanding efforts of Mr. Esposito for the continued education he provides for all his customers.

Our meeting ended with a raffle of gift cards donated by the ABAC and our Sponsors.

*All this info is just a sampling of the great information and knowledge that the ABAC offers its members at their membership meetings.*

The ABAC and its Board of Directors are diligently working to provide members with education, ideas, guest speakers, and solutions to help maintain and enhance the success and profitability of their businesses. **It is imperative that shop owners take an active role in implementing these strategies.** We encourage you to invite your colleagues to our next meeting, as there is strength in numbers, and the **Auto Body Association of Connecticut is committed to supporting member shops in their pursuit of success.**

**These events are being sponsored by Albert Kemperle and the brands they represent**



***Submitted by Don Cushing***

## Stop Poking the Bear: Our Industry's Attempt to Legislate and Regulate Insurer Practices

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\*Opinion Article Submitted by Tony Lombardo\*

I have been reading lately about some nearby states trying to legislate minimum labor rates for collision repairers.

Now, this all began in one state over 20 years ago, and in my opinion, has been a waste of time and a substantial amount of money. Most of that money supports lobbyists and politicians. After all this time, money, and effort, all that has been legislated is the establishment of a committee to discuss and research labor rate charges and what the potential minimum rate should be. **The keyword here is minimum.**

Once a committee has been established and they do all their research, it is my personal opinion that the committee findings and any conclusions will take up to four years and those results, based on outdated information, will be that the minimum labor rate may be around 50 plus dollars per hour. That type of outcome could put the industry further behind where they are today. Is it worth the gamble to wait for this set rate?

What happens if shop costs increase considerably, especially based on our current economy? You can't adjust your charges rapidly with a **"fixed rate"**. It is difficult to operate a business using basic accounting principles when your fees are fixed.

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As an example: When it's busy, and you have 52 + cars in your yard, some that are totaled, and the others are repairable, and you're booked three to four weeks ahead, that's when you should enhance your revenue. That's when prices go up. Why? Because there's a high demand. Now suddenly, business slows down. That's when prices might be adjusted downward. This is known as pricing based on supply and demand. This business climate is happening right now for some shops in the New England area.

What happened to the **"Business 101" principle of establishing your labor rate based on your costs and information derived from your accountant?** You can't run a business based on what an outside group of people decides you should be charging.

How can anyone work with one fixed labor rate? In this particular piece of legislation, a minimum rate is set, but the rates can be negotiable, which means, especially to the insurance industry, that they may be able to negotiate **for less than the minimum**. Even though the collision industry thinks they're going to negotiate higher, that's not going to happen. That is the issue with establishing a minimum rate. **We can't legislate our labor rate problems.**

Let's view this issue within our industry on a national level. Every day shops will state *"These damn insurance companies, they interfere in our business every day. They tell us what to do. They tell us what they're going to pay. They tell us what they don't pay for. They shouldn't be interfering in our businesses"*. We've all heard it so often. If we believe that someone else interfering in our business is wrong, then why are we trying to help enact legislation to interfere with the business of insurance? Wouldn't you think they, the insurance companies, are going to get as upset as we do? Of course they will. What's the difference? The difference is that the insurance companies have a great deal of money. They are not going to idly sit by and let this happen. They can outmaneuver you. It's a lose-lose situation for collision shops.

Why do we want to continue to poke the bear? This industry must learn that the contract of repair is between the vehicle owner and the shop. You need to keep the insurance out of your business. Run your business as a service business, and you won't have any problems. That's the secret. But many shops won't accept that.

Why would you let anyone tell you what to do **when you are responsible for 100% of the repairs?** Because you're the dog that's been beaten with the newspaper all these years.

In my opinion, I ask the question, is legislation good for this industry? Sure, in some cases, if it's legislation to improve the quality of repairs and what the consumer gets from the industry. It should be legislation for types of repairs, such as, Class A, Class B, etc., or what the consumer wants, or who can authorize the repairs, and who is involved in the contract of repairs. These things can be legislated, and I agree it's good legislation.

As a side note, **the word reimbursement is being used quite frequently now, and nothing irritates me more.** Who are they reimbursing? The shop? The shop didn't do any work for the insurance company. Unless you're a DRP, where there's a contract.

It's not reimbursement to the shop; it's a reimbursement to the policyholder.

Quite often, the legislation proposed by our industry and enacted has come back to bite us and has had a reverse effect from the law's original intention. You are in an arena where you are a lightweight fighting the heavyweight. You're not going to win. Get your customer involved. Educate your customers. Smarter, educated customers will help you and your business be more profitable and for your sake and sanity, **'Stop poking the bear.'**

## Revolutionizing Collision Repair Training



### Discover Digital Tools at H.C. Wilcox Technical School in Connecticut.

A TechForce Foundation study suggests the U.S. will face a shortage of 642,000 automotive, diesel and collision technicians by 2024. Attracting young people to the industry and retaining new technicians remain critical challenges. If this shortage isn't addressed, the collision repair industry could face severe delays, increased costs and an overall reduction in service quality. What can be done to address the issue?

It starts in the high school classrooms.

Schools recognize the evolving technology in the refinish industry and teach future technicians with up-to-date curricula. By equipping students with current technology, schools can better prepare them for success in the body shop. Empowering students with relevant knowledge will lead to a more skilled and confident workforce.

As the department head of Collision Repair Technology at H.C. Wilcox Technical High School in Meriden, Connecticut, we have transformed the education of color match and color theory for more than 50 high school students since the recent integration of PPG MagicBox virtual assistant and PPG Linq software last year.

These innovative body shop tools connect technology to young groups of interested students seeking careers in collision repair. This type of technology is a quick study for most young students, who become natural users of these tools.

### The Power of Digital Tools

Our approach leverages the latest technology to enhance the learning environment for tech-savvy students.

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Key tools include a virtual assistant for body shops, where a small device monitors the environmental conditions in the mixing room with sensors to automatically detect humidity, temperature, and pressure for the best results. The virtual assistant helps students adjust to real-world conditions, teaching them how to monitor environmental changes and adapt reducer selections in real time, making their work more efficient and precise.

We also use cloud-based digital color software that identifies the right color for a repair. These tools provide students access to digital color codes and mixing formulas, which prove essential for modern collision repair. The digital representations allow the students to compare accurate variants without mixing and spraying color yet thoroughly understand variant terminology. This is a new way of engaging and relevant instruction for students. Students must experience the innovation first-hand if we want to attract new technicians.

### **Hands-On Experience**

Growing up in a digital world, today's students use technology naturally. We capitalize on this by making learning more interactive and relevant through these digital tools. The collision repair program at H.C. Wilcox follows the I-CAR curriculum for ProLevel 1 training. This ensures that the students receive hands-on experience with the latest technology, not just in refinishing but in structural and nonstructural repair and frame measurement. The program's integration of digital tools, such as the PPG MagicBox, means students learn theory while applying their knowledge in practical settings.

The four-year program has students spend half their time in the shop and half in academics annually. Body shops that hire our students consistently mention their readiness for real-world challenges.

### **Donations for Learning**

It takes donations from the industry to offer this experience to high school students. This technology will provide students with hands-on experience in modern paint application techniques, helping them gain valuable expertise in an industry increasingly relying on innovation. By investing in this advanced tool, paint and coatings companies can enrich the educational curriculum and empower the next generation of skilled professionals to succeed in a competitive market.

### **Future Technicians**

Body shop owners notice these advancements in technician training. They see the potential in hiring well-trained, tech-savvy graduates and strive not to fall behind. Shop owners constantly look for skilled technicians. By showing body shops the technology used in the program to train future technicians, we also help shops see the benefits of these tools in their operations.

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As the collision repair industry continues to evolve, schools like H.C. Wilcox, supported by innovative companies like PPG, are paving the way for a future workforce equipped with both the skills and the technology to succeed.

### About the Author

Bob Turcotte | Department Head,  
Collision Repair Technology Program

Bob Turcotte is the department head of the Collision Repair Technology program at H.C. Wilcox Technical School in Meriden, Connecticut, one of 18 Connecticut Technical High Schools where he has worked for 20 years. Before becoming an educator, he worked in the collision repair and engineering industries for 16 years.

### What is TechForce Foundation?

**TechForce powers technical careers so communities thrive.**

TechForce™ is a community of students, working techs, educators, industry and donors committed to helping young people find a technical education and career that fits (Hence the name “Tech-Force”). **Our mission is to champion all students to and through their technical education and into careers as professional technicians.**

TechForce Foundation is the only nonprofit 501(c)(3) committed to the career exploration and workforce development of professional technicians across *all sectors* including (but not limited to) automotive, aviation, collision, diesel (trucking, agriculture, construction, heavy-duty, stationary engines, and rentals), fleets, marine, motorcycle, motorsports, restoration, welding, and emerging technologies.

TechForce inspires people to *explore the technician profession*; supports students obtaining the *technical education* needed to be workforce-ready; and *connects techs to resources, mentors and employers* to thrive in their careers.

***As a public charity, TechForce is funded by donations from corporations, foundations and individuals.***

**Source: [www.FenderBender.com](http://www.FenderBender.com)**

# Tariffs



John M. Parese is a partner at the New Haven-based firm of Buckley Wynne & Parese

Recently imposed sweeping tariffs are likely to impact your business. As a board-certified econometrist, I thought it only prudent to offer some unsolicited observations.

Tariffs are essentially taxes imposed by one country on imported goods. They can profoundly affect global trade, influencing everything from consumer prices to production costs.

For the U.S. auto body industry, tariffs are especially significant due to the industry's heavy reliance on foreign-made parts and materials and its position within the global automotive supply chain. The sweeping tariffs announced on April 2, 2025, will likely affect the U.S. auto body industry, from cost increases to shifting manufacturing strategies.

The U.S. auto body industry is one part of the complex, globalized supply chain, where automakers often rely on imported components, such as steel, aluminum, electronics, and other critical parts.

A typical modern vehicle contains roughly 30,000 individual components, including everything from the engine block to the smallest nuts and bolts. Imposing tariffs on the imports of vehicles and vehicle parts is inevitably going to affect your business. In 2018, when the U.S. imposed tariffs on imported steel and aluminum, for example, those tariffs particularly impacted the auto industry, which consumes a significant

portion of the nation's steel and aluminum.

President Trump argues that the tariffs will protect domestic industries, create more factory jobs, shrink the federal deficit, lower food prices, and boost the U.S. economy. Opponents fear that tariffs will disrupt free trade, raise the cost of production and the cost of consumer goods, and potentially send our economy into a recession. In either scenario or some combination of these eventualities, the auto body industry will likely have to contend with rising material costs and uncertainty about future trade policies.

One of the most immediate effects of tariffs on the auto industry will likely be the increase in production costs. U.S. automakers that rely on foreign suppliers for critical parts such as engine components, airbags, or electronic systems are likely to face higher expenses. A significant portion of automotive parts and supplies comes from countries like China, Mexico, and Canada, all of which are now subject to new tariffs.

When tariffs are applied to materials such as steel and aluminum, that usually leads to price hikes that ripple through the entire supply chain. Even though U.S. automakers could look to alternative suppliers, doing so often results in higher costs or diminished supply reliability, further complicating their operations.

As a result, some economists fear that U.S. manufacturers will have no choice but to pass on these increased costs to consumers.

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The current global nature of the auto body supply chain means that tariffs can have cascading effects on manufacturers, especially those that operate in a just-in-time inventory system. In the auto industry, parts and materials are often shipped and delivered on a tight timeline to maintain efficient production schedules. Tariffs have a distinct way of disrupting this system, creating delays in shipments and increasing the overall costs of inventory. Automakers who depend on just-in-time production to keep costs low may find themselves facing production bottlenecks and longer lead times.

For smaller suppliers or auto body shops that rely on imported parts, tariffs can create financial strain. These smaller players often cannot absorb the higher costs of tariffs as easily as larger manufacturers. As a result, they might be forced to pass those costs onto consumers or make difficult decisions about whether to maintain operations, adjust pricing, or find alternative suppliers, further exacerbating disruptions in the market.

Part delivery delays could also mean longer cycle times and greater storage fees. We have seen insurers become more obdurate, refusing to pay reasonable storage fees (often without any justification or cause). This kind of pushback will only get worse if delays cause greater storage fees. You can protect your business by getting ahead of this problem by utilizing proper legal documents and transparently discussing your charges with customers and insurers.

The impact of these tariffs is likely to be multifaceted, influencing everything from production costs to consumer prices and global supply chains. Tariffs will have significant implications for the auto body industry. As a board-certified econometrist, I can say with some confidence that we all need to keep an eye on this evolving picture and be prepared to make adjustments as necessary to stay sharp.

I wish you and your families good health and happiness as we welcome warmer weather.

***John M. Parese, Esq. is a Partner with the law firm of Buckley Wynne & Parese and serves as General Counsel to the ABAC. Buckley Wynne & Parese 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.***



# ABAC Government Relations Update



By Andy Markowski, Esq.

Statehouse Partners, LLC

ABAC Lobbyist

## Connecticut Legislative Update: Key Issues for Auto Body Professionals

As we've now reached the midpoint of the 2025 legislative session, there are several bills under consideration at the State Capitol that could significantly impact collision repair shops, towing operators, and anyone working in or around the automotive industry. From towing regulations to auto insurance reforms and the overall state budget outlook, here's what you need to know.

### Towing Legislation: Reforms That Could Affect Towing Business

#### House Bill 7162 – Major Towing Practices Reform Bill

One of the most impactful bills this session, HB 7162, has been approved by the Transportation Committee and is gaining attention statewide. If passed, it would bring multiple changes to towing rules, including:

- Extending the holding period for low-value vehicles from 15 to 30 days before a sale.
- Requiring longer operating hours to give vehicle owners more time to retrieve their cars.
- Prohibiting cash-only payment policies.
- Implementing a 24-hour notice requirement for non-emergency private property tows.
- Requiring towing companies to provide a written "bill of rights" to inform vehicle owners of their options and rights.

The bill is supposedly aimed at addressing concerns about so-called "predatory towing" practices, particularly following recent investigative media reporting, but it could also increase administrative and compliance responsibilities for legitimate operators.

#### Senate Bill 1449 – Medium and Heavy-Duty Towing Oversight

Another towing bill this session is focused on better regulating towing services for larger vehicles like tractor-trailers and buses. It was also approved by the Transportation Committee and reflects a growing interest by lawmakers in standardizing practices for the heavy-duty sector.

It is important to note that as currently drafted, these bills would only apply to non-consensual towing situations, but ABAC will be monitoring this legislation very closely.

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## **Insurance-Related Bills**

There are some possible changes ahead related to the following bills which have been approved by the Insurance & Real Estate Committee.

### **House Bill 6898 – Insurance Law Study and Defensive Driving Expansion**

This proposal calls for a comprehensive study comparing Connecticut's automobile liability insurance laws with those of other states. It also removes the current age restriction on accident prevention courses, allowing more drivers to qualify for insurance discounts.

### **House Bill 6435 – DOI Arbitration Fee Reimbursement**

This bill addresses the arbitration process for vehicle damage disputes. If a claimant wins arbitration and didn't reject a settlement offer equal to or better than the final award, the insurer would be required to reimburse the state for the arbitration costs. This could reduce out-of-pocket expenses for consumers challenging unfair claims decisions through DOI's arbitration program.

## **Environmental Related Legislation**

Two bills moving through the legislative process that have already been approved by the Environment Committee could potentially affect how tires and batteries are recycled and/or disposed of in Connecticut.

### **House Bill 5017 – Tire Stewardship Program Participation**

This bill would require tire retailers to participate in the state's tire stewardship program, aiming to create a more structured and effective tire recycling and management system. Compliance would involve adhering to specific collection and disposal protocols.

### **House Bill 5019 – Extended Producer Responsibility for Consumer Batteries**

This bill proposes establishing an extended producer responsibility program for certain consumer batteries sold and distributed in the state. Manufacturers would be responsible for the collection and recycling of used batteries.

## **Connecticut's Budget & Fiscal Outlook: Stable, Cautious, but Much Uncertainty Ahead**

Connecticut's financial picture looks stable, for now. Comptroller Sean Scanlon has reported a projected \$443 million surplus for the General Fund and a \$159 million surplus in the Special Transportation Fund for the current (2025) Fiscal Year. That's good news for taxpayers and citizens. However, Governor Ned Lamont and legislative leaders have warned that pending cuts of federal dollars to Connecticut — like those for the state's Medicaid program — are expected to consume most or all of the state's future revenue growth as well as possibly result in a need to tap into the state's saving account, which currently has a balance of over \$4 billion. The message from leader's in Hartford is clear: while things look good today, fiscal pressures are building, and this year's as well as future budgets may require very difficult choices.

### **Bottom Line**

There's a lot moving at the Capitol that could affect how you do business and impact your customers as consumers and taxpayers.

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We'll keep you posted as things progress, but if any of these bills strike a nerve, now's the time to speak up. Reach out to your local lawmakers or reach out to the ABAC with questions or concerns. Your voice matters, and together, we can make sure the industry is well-represented at the Capitol.

Stay informed. Stay engaged. Stay connected.

***The 2025 State Legislative Session Is Underway – Your Local Legislators Need To Hear From You – Reach Out And Tell Them What Matters To You, The ABAC, And Connecticut's Collision Repair Industry!***

Have a question? Want to express your opinion? Just want to know who now represents you in Hartford? Go to the website below and enter your home or business address to look up your state legislators; with a few quick clicks you can visit their official webpage, email them, or get their office phone number to make a call. Remember – as an ABAC member, your voice matters!

<https://www.cga.ct.gov/asp/menu/cgafindleg.asp>

As always, if you have questions on legislation or regulations or if you would like more information on an issue, please feel free to contact ABAC Lobbyist Andy Markowski at: (860) 707-3620 or [andy@statehouselobbying.com](mailto:andy@statehouselobbying.com).

***\*Information provided in this article is for educational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice.***

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## Three Rhode Island bills filed in the state's legislature could impact the collision repair industry.

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The House Corporations Committee decided Tuesday to further study [HB 5571](#). The bill was introduced Feb. 26. The bill increases the amount of damage that requires an appraisal performed by a licensed appraiser to \$5,000 from \$2,500. It also increases the time in which appraisals must be completed to four business days from three.

Another bill, [H 5572](#), was held Tuesday for further study by the committee. The bill was introduced Feb. 26. The bill adds a definition for "consumer accessible fair market value" to the state's Unfair Claims Settlement Practices Act. Under the bill, the valuation would have to meet the following requirements:

- Publicly available or accessible via electronic or print
- Commonly used by the automotive industry and car-buying public
- VIN-specific
- Reflects a vehicle's unique and widely available characteristics, including but not limited to trim and options, prior damage, prior service, and prior ownership information

A third bill, [H 6053](#), was also held for further study by the committee on Tuesday. It was introduced March 12.

The bill increases the total loss threshold. Vehicles would be total losses if the cost to rebuild or reconstruct them to pre-accident condition is less than 85% of the fair market value. The current threshold is 75%.

**Source: [www.RepaierDrivenNews.com](http://www.RepaierDrivenNews.com) Article by Teresa Moss**

## ‘Who Pays?’ survey finds more shops recognize insurers will pay for use of spectrophotometer; latest survey open through April

More than 1 in 5 shops now say they have billed insurers for the labor time required to set up and use a spectrophotometer, or color match camera, according to the quarterly “Who Pays for What?” survey completed earlier this year, and a higher percentage of them say they are being paid regularly for it by eight large national insurance companies.

“We only started asking this question two years ago,” shop consultant Mike Anderson of Collision Advice, who conducts the quarterly surveys with *CRASH Network*, said. “In that time, the percentage of shops who believe that insurers ‘never’ pay for this procedure has dropped from 71 percent to 65 percent, while the number of shops saying they are paid for it ‘always’ or ‘most of the time,’ has grown.”

In response to inquiries submitted through the Database Enhancement Gateway, all three major estimating system providers have confirmed that use of the camera to determine a color code formulation is not included in the published refinish labor times.

“As automakers come out with more variations of colors, the use of a camera can become even more critical,” Anderson said. “It can be a not-inconsiderable amount of time in that you may have to buff or clean the panel prior to using the camera, and ensure you have the vehicle or panel placed in certain lighting conditions.”

The latest quarterly “Who Pays for What?” survey is now open through the month of April. It focuses on not-included frame and mechanical labor operations. Shops can take the survey at:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Ry6DNDB>

Survey participants receive a free report with complete survey findings along with analysis and resources to help shops better understand and use the information presented.

The survey can be completed in about 15 minutes by anyone familiar with their shop’s billing practices and the payment practices of at least some of the largest national insurers. Each shop’s individual responses are held in the strictest confidence; only aggregated data is released.

The results of previous surveys are also available online (<https://www.crashnetwork.com/collisionadvice>).

Collision Advice ([www.CollisionAdvice.com](http://www.CollisionAdvice.com)) is an independent training and consulting firm featuring some of the most respected and experienced experts in the collision repair industry. CRASH Network ([www.Crash-Network.com](http://www.Crash-Network.com)) is a subscription newsletter offering news and information not available from other industry sources.

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