

ABAC NEWS

Auto Body Association of Connecticut

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ABAC President Bob Amendola

on Advocacy,
Accountability,
and the Road Ahead

The Official Newsletter of the Auto Body Association of Connecticut

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From the Desk of ABAC Vice - President Ashley Brunelle

Strength in Numbers: Why Filing DOI Complaints Matters More Than Ever



Ashley Brunelle
Autoworks of Westville
ABAC Vice President

As collision repair professionals, we navigate a complex and highly regulated environment where fairness, transparency, and adherence to established standards are critical, not only for our businesses, but for the safety and financial well-being of our customers. Yet, many of us continue to encounter situations where those standards are not upheld. Whether it's improper appraisal practices, post-negotiation estimate changes, or customers being forced to pay out of pocket for necessary repairs, these issues

persist across our industry.

One of the most effective tools we have to address these challenges is also one of the most underutilized: filing formal complaints with the Department of Insurance (DOI).

It's understandable that some shops may feel discouraged. Many of us have taken the time to submit complaints in the past, only to see little or no immediate resolution. However, it's important to recognize that the value of these complaints extends far beyond any single outcome. Each complaint contributes to a larger body of evidence, one that documents patterns, highlights systemic issues, and ultimately strengthens our ability as an association to advocate for meaningful change.

Simply put, there is strength in numbers.

When complaints are consistently filed, they create a documented record that cannot be ignored. While one isolated issue may be dismissed or overlooked, a pattern of similar complaints from multiple shops across the state carries significantly more weight. This collective documentation allows ABAC to elevate concerns to a higher level within the DOI, pushing for broader review, accountability, and enforcement.

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Equally important is the fact that the complaint process itself is straightforward and accessible. Filing a DOI complaint does not require extensive time or resources, yet it provides a formal mechanism to ensure that violations are recorded and reviewed. Whether you are filing on behalf of your shop or advocating for a customer, taking that step helps protect both your business and the integrity of the repair process.

There are several common scenarios where filing a complaint is not only appropriate, but necessary. For example, when an insurance company or appraisal firm fails to send a licensed appraiser as requested, it raises serious questions about compliance and oversight. Similarly, when a customer is forced to pay out of pocket for proper and safe repairs that should be covered, it directly impacts consumer protection. Another frequent issue arises when agreed-upon estimates or supplements are altered after negotiations have been completed, undermining the repair process and creating unnecessary conflict.

These are not minor inconveniences; they are violations that affect the entire industry.

By taking the time to document and report these occurrences, we are not only addressing individual incidents, we are building a case for systemic improvement. Every complaint filed helps ABAC identify trends, prioritize issues, and advocate more effectively on behalf of its members.

I strongly encourage every member to make DOI complaints a regular part of your response when violations occur. Even when the immediate outcome may seem minimal, the long-term impact is significant. Together, our collective efforts can drive greater accountability, improve industry standards, and ensure a fairer process for both repairers and consumers.

The process is simple. The impact is powerful. And the responsibility is ours to share.

Let's continue to document, report, and advocate—because meaningful change starts with taking action.

Ashley Brunelle
Autoworks of Westville
ABAC Vice President



“Unity Is Strength: Bob Amendola on Advocacy, Accountability, and the Road Ahead”



An Interview with Bob Amendola, President of the Auto Body Association of Connecticut and owner of Autoworks of Westville in New Haven, Connecticut.

In an industry facing increasing repair complexity, insurer pressure, and tightening margins, Bob Amendola remains a steady and principled voice for professionalism, consumer protection, and proper repair procedures. With more than four decades of experience in the automotive repair industry, Bob has built his career on technical expertise, integrity, and unwavering advocacy for both collision repair professionals and the motoring public.

As a Mechanical Engineering graduate of the University of New Haven and a lifelong automotive enthusiast, Bob founded Autoworks of Westville in 1986. Over nearly 40 years, he has established the shop as a trusted fixture in the Greater New Haven community, committed to safe, manufacturer-compliant repairs and transparent customer service.

Since 2018, Bob has served as President of the Auto Body Association of Connecticut (ABAC), a nonprofit trade association dedicated to protecting consumers and advancing the professionalism of repair facilities across the state. In that role, he has become a respected voice before the Connecticut General Assembly, providing testimony on motor vehicle repair legislation and insurance reform that directly impacts both repairers and policyholders.

A former Travelers Insurance professional, licensed Connecticut appraiser, and ASE-certified technician, Bob brings a rare, 360-degree perspective to today's collision repair challenges. Now joined in business by three of his four children—Abbey, Tyler, and Ashley—he continues to shape the future of his company while mentoring the next generation of industry professionals.

In this interview, Bob shares his insights on leadership, legislative advocacy, repair contracts, and insurer accountability, and why the future of collision repair depends on shops maintaining control of their operations—without compromising safety or integrity.

Early Career & Foundations

Don: What initially drew you to the automotive industry, and how did earning your Mechanical Engineering degree influence your approach to collision repair and business ownership?

Bob: It's really two-fold. The love of cars and a family connection to NASCAR through Bobby Allison.



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My uncle was instrumental in that whole equation with Allison having spent time during the summer months with the NASCAR team (which at the time was Winston Cup). My dad was a hairdresser, I wasn't "golden spooned" into anything. Secondly, my engineering knowledge had real world influence on the pursuit of research. Engineering is problem solving and, in this business, we're always putting puzzles back together. That's what we do.

Don: When you founded Autoworks of Westville in 1986, what was your original vision for the company? How has that vision evolved over the decades?

Bob: *I wanted a quality repair shop that would service the motoring public putting them first over insurance companies wants. Our business has grown exponentially through hard work, honesty and quality. That's the magic recipe for any successful business.*

Business Ownership & Operations

Don: In today's environment, what distinguishes a truly professional collision repair facility from the rest?

Bob: *Very simple. The setting of standards and the ability not to waver from them.*

Don: Over the past 30–40 years, what have been the most dramatic changes in the collision repair industry?

Bob: *Technology for sure. But the unwillingness of third-party payers to indemnify claims. In a nutshell, that's what it comes down to. This is such a blatant disregard for policyholders or claimants. And the insurance companies' profits reflect upon this immensely.*

Don: Having worked for Travelers Insurance earlier in your career, what insights did that experience provide—and how does it continue to shape the way you operate your shop today?

Bob: *Understanding the insurance world is a great equalizer; knowing laws and regulations is paramount. It's really simple.*

ABAC Leadership & Advocacy

Don: You have served as ABAC President since 2018. Looking back, what accomplishments are you most proud of during your tenure?

Bob: *The ability to help others and give back. Our motto "Unity is Strength" is exactly what it is.*

Don: Why is legislative advocacy so critical for collision repair professionals in Connecticut?

Bob: *Legislative monitoring is essential to protecting our industry from harmful or unfavorable legislation. Staying informed allows us to respond proactively rather than react after the fact. This is why having a dedicated lobbyist is so important. ABAC is fortunate to have Andy Markowski serving in this role, keeping us informed and engaged on legislative developments that impact our industry.*

Don: When you testify before the Connecticut General Assembly, what core message do you want lawmakers to understand about our industry?

Bob: *Legislators quite often believe that insurers indemnify losses on their own without oversight. This is a total misconception. It's gotten so out of hand, and the consumer is being harmed.*

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Repair Contracts & Customer Communication

Don: You've emphasized that the repair contract exists between the shop and the customer, not the insurance company. Why is that distinction so important for repairers to understand?

Bob: *The insurance company and the insured (the customer) have a contractual relationship—the insurance policy. Separately, the repair facility and the customer have their own agreement—the repair contract. These are parallel relationships, and they should be treated as such.*

The dispute over payment, particularly in cases of short pay, is not the repairer's fight. That responsibility lies between the insurer and the policyholder. Ultimately, it is the vehicle owner's obligation to ensure their repairs are paid in full.

For too long, our industry has taken on this burden, inserting itself into disputes that do not belong to us. It's time to correct that mindset. This is not the repairer's fight.

Don: You are known for discussing potential insurance-related challenges with customers before repairs begin. What does that conversation typically include?

Bob: *Timing is everything with the conversation that you have with your customer, and this conversation has to happen at the time of the initial estimate. This is part of the pre-qualification process. Not everyone can be a customer. That's a hard lesson to learn. A customer is someone that allows you to perform goods and services at a fair and reasonable price that allows you to make a fair and reasonable profit.*

Don: Why is transparency at the outset essential to protecting both the consumer and the repair facility?

Bob: *Transparency is paramount. There's a big difference between knowing and understanding. Understanding is when you're handing over your credit card. Knowing is when I tell you!*

Insurance Short Pays & Shop Responsibilities

Don: When faced with a short-pay, shops generally have three options: request payment from the customer, absorb the loss, or take an Assignment of Proceeds. Why should "losing money on the job" no longer be considered a viable option?

Bob: *Every business in any field can only run in the red for so long. The only exception to this is the Federal Government, they have a printing press! It is your fiduciary responsibility as a corporate officer of your business to do your utmost to make a profit. You must or you will not be in business. This is the biggest problem with most of our colleagues.*

Don: What are the long-term consequences for shops that routinely absorb short pays?

Bob: *Four words. Going Out of Business!*

Don: Can you explain how an Assignment of Proceeds works and why more repairers should understand this tool?

Bob: *If you choose to take on the fight, an Assignment of Proceeds is a legal agreement where a policyholder (the customer) transfers the right to receive payment from an insurance claim to a third party, such as you, a repairer after a loss has occurred.*

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This tool is essential for repairers—particularly in the auto body industries—to guarantee payment for repairs, reduce administrative burdens, and manage claims without relying on the customer to act as an intermediary. But understand this; In business, cash flow is paramount. When you take an Assignment of Proceeds, you don't have cash flow. That's why we are very selective in what we do.

Don: When an insurer refuses to pay for certain procedures, where does the responsibility lie—legally and practically—between the insured and the repair facility?

Bob: *The responsibility and liabilities squarely fall on the repair shop. And it is FOREVER! Not just until your customer sells the vehicle.*

Consumer Rights & Education

Don: You've stated that unpaid amounts are owed to the insured—not the repair shop. Why is this distinction so important from both a legal and strategic standpoint?

Bob: *Again, the contract is between the shop and the vehicle owner and the insurance company and the insured. Parallel line never cross.*

Don: Consumers may have options such as paying the difference, pursuing legal action, or utilizing the arbitration clause through the Department of Insurance. In your experience, how aware are customers of these rights?

Bob: *Most consumers are not aware of their options. It's our job to let them know these choices.*

Don: What role should ABAC members play in educating consumers about their rights and responsibilities?

Bob: *Knowledge is power. When you educate the consumer on their rights you gain their trust and admiration.*

Industry Challenges & The Road Ahead

Don: What do you see as the greatest threats—and the greatest opportunities—facing independent collision repairers today?

Bob: *The greatest threat to independent collision repairers is not understanding your P&L numbers and your KPI's. The greatest opportunity is to understand owner involvement and attention to detail along with superior quality breeds success. All these things are very important to understand about running a successful business.*

Don: How should shop owners prepare for ongoing advancements in vehicle technology, evolving insurance practices, and workforce development challenges?

Bob: *Shop based training and continued repair procedures research. Insurance practices are not our responsibility. Our sole responsibility is no different than a medical doctor, we have your life (your vehicle) in our hands. And we need to understand that the days of the doo-rag and cigarette in hand ARE OVER!*

Family, Legacy & Leadership

Don: Three of your four children have joined the business. What has that meant to you personally and professionally?

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Bob: I've been very fortunate to work alongside my family in a professional capacity. That experience has reinforced how important it is to have a solid contingency plan for the future.

Succession planning isn't something you can put together when you're ready to retire, it needs to begin well in advance. Ideally, that process should start at least a decade ahead of time to ensure a smooth transition and long-term stability.

Don: When your career is eventually reflected upon, what do you hope you will be remembered for—as a business owner, industry advocate, and leader?

Bob: I hope to be remembered for what I've given back to this industry. The most rewarding part of my journey has been helping those around me in the collision repair community.

A Closing Statement from the President of the ABAC

Don: As we wrapped up, we asked Bob to share a parting message with our readers.

Bob: This is "go time." Shops need to understand that if you don't make changes now, you're planning to fail. It takes millions of dollars to operate a quality facility, and there's no room for missteps. Without the proper financial backing, the pressure doesn't ease—it builds, becoming increasingly difficult to manage and ultimately crippling.

We would like to sincerely thank Bob Amendola for taking the time to participate in this interview. We also appreciate his thoughtful insights and candid remarks regarding his involvement as President of the Auto Body Association of Connecticut, as well as his perspective on the collision repair industry as a whole as a collision shop owner.

Submitted by Don Cushing – ABAC News



Leading the Charge: ABAC Addresses Industry Challenges and Member Success

The latest membership meeting of the Auto Body Association of Connecticut (ABAC) was held on March 10, 2026, at the Courtyard Marriott.



Taking to the podium, ABAC President Bob Amendola opened the evening by thanking attendees for their continued support and participation.

“I again want to sincerely thank all of our ABAC Corporate Sponsors and our ABAC News Supporting Advertisers,” said Bob. “They have made a financial commitment to support your Auto Body Association of Connecticut. In return, we ask all members to remember—support those who support you.”

Bob went on to recognize key sponsors, including Buckley Wynne & Parese, the Platinum Sponsor of the ABAC News Advertisers Directory, and Bald Hill Dodge Chrysler Jeep Kia, the

Gold Sponsor. He emphasized that the association’s ability to deliver value to its members would not be possible without the continued support of these partners.

The association also welcomed new advertisers to the ABAC News Supporting Advertisers Directory:

- Capitol South CDJR – New London
- Wile Hyundai - Columbia
- Superior Auto ADAS - Westbrook

In addition, ABAC announced new members:

- Executive Collision Center - Wallingford
- Powsner Auto Metal Works – New Haven

The evening’s primary meeting sponsor was AkzoNobel, represented by:

- Paul Cook
- Radcliffe White
- John Falzone
- Sam Lopez
- Brent Smith

AkzoNobel

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Prior to dinner and the evening’s feature presentation, Bob addressed several important industry issues. He emphasized that insurance companies are required under Connecticut Regulation 38a-790-4 to leave a copy of the estimate with the repair facility. This regulation helps prevent post-visit changes—often reductions—to the estimate.

Bob encouraged members to assert this requirement and, when necessary, remind insurers of their obligation under the law. He also stressed the importance of having transparent conversations with customers regarding insurer short-pays.

“If you do not have this conversation with your customer and do not have them cover the short-pay difference,” Bob noted, ***“you risk not being able to stay in business—or worse, not repairing the vehicle correctly and safely.”***



ABAC Legal Counsel John M. Parese then expanded on these topics, outlining legal considerations and options available to shops, as well as strategies for involving customers more directly in the claims process.

Following dinner, President Amendola introduced the evening’s guest speaker, Paul Cook of AkzoNobel, who delivered the featured presentation.

Cook’s presentation was titled **“Developing Your Consumer Guide to Fully Reimbursed Auto Claims”** which provided valuable insight into how shop owners and estimators can better support their customers throughout the claims process—while also protecting shop profitability and minimizing liability.

The session focused on practical strategies to help customers better understand their insurance policies and coverages, how insurers evaluate and quantify a loss, and the critical importance of following OEM repair procedures to ensure vehicle safety and proper restoration.

Attendees also gained guidance on how customers can effectively respond to insurer short-pay situations, helping to ensure that repairs are fully reimbursed and completed to the appropriate standard.

A significant portion of the discussion addressed repair-related liability, including the differences between an insurer’s estimate and a proper repair blueprint, the responsibilities and risks assumed by repairers, and the importance of adhering to OEM repair procedures.



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Emphasis was also placed on documentation best practices as a key component in protecting both the customer and the repair facility.

The presentation was followed by strong member engagement, with an interactive question-and-answer session that allowed attendees to share real-world experiences, ask targeted questions, and further explore the challenges and solutions discussed.

Overall, the presentation reinforced the importance of customer education, proper repair planning, and thorough documentation as essential tools for navigating today's complex claims environment.

This discussion reflects the ABAC's ongoing commitment to equipping its members with the knowledge and tools needed to advocate for proper repairs, protect their businesses, and better serve their customers.

Your ABAC and its Board of Directors remain committed to providing members with valuable education, innovative ideas, engaging guest speakers, and practical solutions to help keep your businesses successful and profitable.

However, the continued strength of our association depends on you. As a shop owner, your involvement is essential. We encourage you to reach out to your colleagues and invite them to attend our next meeting.

There is strength in numbers, and the ABAC is dedicated to supporting every member shop on its path to continued success.



Submitted by Don Cushing - ABAC News

“A Judge’s Perspective: Inspiring Talent at SkillsUSA Connecticut”

Submitted by:

Tony Ferraiolo
A&R Body Specialty
Wallingford, Ct

I had the privilege of serving as a judge at SkillsUSA for the Connecticut Tech Schools, and it turned out to be an incredibly rewarding experience. I wasn’t quite sure what to expect going in, but it was great to see familiar colleagues from ABAC there, alongside technical school instructors, industry vendors, consultants, and even Governor Ned Lamont. It was a well-attended and impressive event.



The competition brought together some of the most talented auto collision students from across Connecticut, truly the best of the best. These students are not only highly skilled, but deeply passionate about their craft. The winner will go on to represent Connecticut at the national competition in Atlanta this June, which speaks volumes about the level of talent present.

As a judge, I was genuinely inspired by the dedication, precision, and pride these students demonstrated in their work. It was a powerful reminder that the future of this trade is in good hands. In a time when there is so much focus on AI and emerging technologies, experiences like this reinforce that there are still essential, hands-on professions like auto collision repair where skilled technicians are irreplaceable, especially when it comes to vehicle safety and quality workmanship.

It was truly a great day to witness young people at their best.

For those in the industry who are looking for motivated, capable future employees, I strongly encourage you to connect with your local technical schools and get involved. Supporting these programs is an investment in the future of the industry.

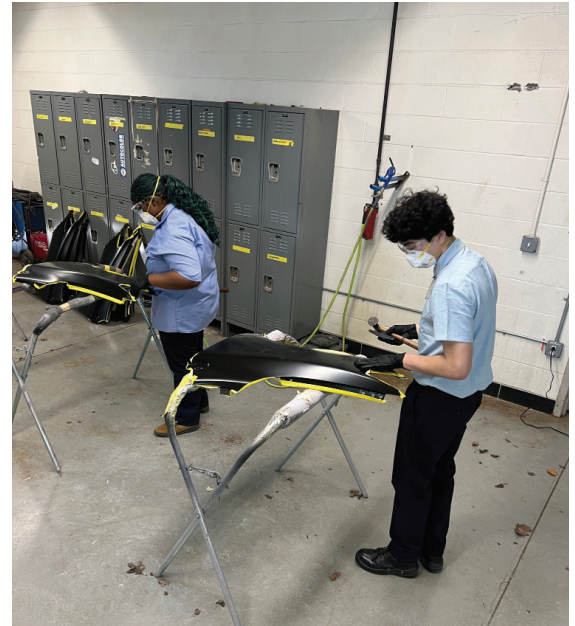
A big thank you to everyone who helped make this competition such a success.

ABAC Judges:

Tony Cavallaro Jr. - Kevin Clavette -Tony Ferraiolo -Hoffman Auto Group

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If you're interested in participating as a judge or supporting this event through donations, please contact:

Lou Comacho
 Associate Education Consultant
 Transportation Technology Trades
 860-807-2090
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2026 State Conference Results

2026 Connecticut State Skills Conference
 Collision Repair Technology High School

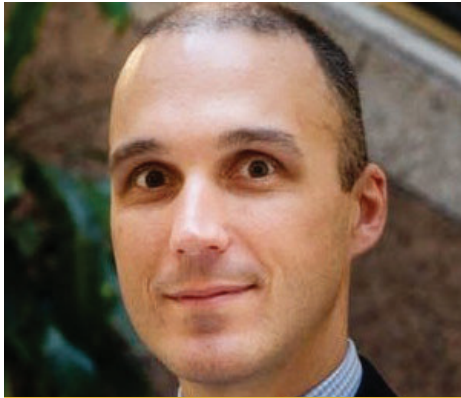
Gold Rank: Daniel Garcia
 H C Wilcox Technical High School Meriden, CT

Silver Rank: Bryan Wood
 Henry Abbott Technical High School Danbury, CT

Bronze Rank: Nina Poplawski
 H H Ellis Technical High School Danielson, CT



ABAC Government Relations Update



Andy Markowski, Esq.
Statehouse Partners, LLC
ABAC Lobbyist

LEGISLATIVE SESSION ENTERS CRITICAL TIME IN HARTFORD

As we head into the final month of the 2026 “short” state legislative session, things are starting to move quickly at the Capitol. At this point in the calendar, all committee deadlines have passed, most of the early proposals have either advanced or fallen away, and attention has shifted to the bills that actually have a chance of becoming law, along with the state budget and the politics that come with it. While over 1,200 bills have been introduced this year, there are still over 600 bills that remain in play and on the legislative calendar into the final stretch.

For those of you running shops day to day, a lot of what happens in Hartford can feel removed from the work in your bay. But the reality is many of these decisions directly affect how you operate, what you get paid, how much you are taxed, and how you deal with insurers and customers. From here on out, the pace in Hartford will pick up. The state budget,

along with broader political considerations - given that 2026 is a big state election year for both Governor and all 187 state legislators - will drive much of what gets done before adjournment in May.

NEW INSURANCE COMMISSIONER CONFIRMED

The state legislature recently confirmed Josh Hershman as Connecticut’s Insurance Commissioner by a unanimous vote in favor of Senate Resolution 8, officially putting new leadership in place at the Department of Insurance. From ABAC’s perspective, the focus now is on what the new commissioner puts into practice in overseeing things like claim handling, insurer conduct, and consumer protection.

As Commissioner Hershman settles into this new role, the ABAC will be focused on maintaining an open line of communication with the Department, and also making sure they understand where the system is falling short for both repairers and customers alike.

TIRE STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM MOVING FORWARD, EXPANDING IMPACT ON RETAILERS

“Tire stewardship”, or the establishment of a statewide collection system for used or discarded tires, is one of those issues that has been talked about for a few years in Hartford, but it’s now getting much more real. House Bill 5157 has recently passed the House and is awaiting action in the Senate. This bill would require tire retailers to participate in the state’s stewardship program starting in 2027. Up to now, retailers have been able to opt in, but apparently none have, resulting in this legislation. There are still details that would need to be worked out between the state, manufacturers, tire stewardship organizations, and retailers, but if it ultimately moves forward, it could change how shops handle tires in the future.

TOWING ISSUES STILL PENDING BEFORE LEGISLATURE

Towing issues continue to be a focus on the legislature’s Transportation Committee following last year’s significant changes to nonconsensual towing laws. This year, House Bill 5465 is the main follow-up effort to last session’s reforms. It reflects recommendations from the DMV-led towing working group and is aimed at tightening and standardizing how nonconsensual towing and storage is handled across Connecticut. On a related note, Senate Bill 367 is also under discussion and it could ultimately bring additional changes and oversight, but primarily by creating a working group to study roadside safety concerns for towing and recovery professionals. As always with towing legislation, the details are still evolving and being negotiated.

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WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

Workforce needs continues to be a key focus for lawmakers this session, both through legislation and executive action by the Governor.

Senate Bill 135, which focuses on the state's Technical Education and Career System High Schools (CTECH), is part of an ongoing conversation about how Connecticut trains and prepares students for skilled trades. The bill itself deals largely with creating better efficiency, governance and administrative structure, and is supported by the CTECH Executive Director.

Also, Governor Lamont recently issued Executive Order 26-2, creating a new "Connecticut Career Pathway Commission", with a goal of better aligning education, workforce training programs, and employer demand across key industries in the state. This can be seen as a positive step and reinforces what many shop owners and other employers have been saying for years, that Connecticut needs stronger, more direct pipelines from our schools into skilled jobs.

CTECH is one of the main pipelines for bringing new technicians into the field, and even with that, we all know it isn't enough. Any changes to how either the CTECH or our traditional ("comprehensive") high schools operate that are more responsive to employer demand and working with industry is also a positive development and one that the ABAC will be monitoring closely.

GLASS REPAIR MODEL LEGISLATION STUDY SCRAPPED, FOR NOW

One bill that will not be moving forward this year is House Bill 5262, which did not make it out of the Insurance Committee. That said, it included a provision worth paying attention to.

Section 9 of this bill would have required the state to study and consider a model auto glass repair act developed by the National Council of Insurance Legislators (NCOIL). While that study is off the table for now, similar efforts in other states have raised concerns, with a focus on when glass replacement involves ADAS calibration. We expect this issue to come back in some form in the future. So stay tuned.

The 2026 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.

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

A Picture is Worth 1,000 ... Missed Line Items in Your Estimate



Attorney Chris Hernandez
Buckley, Wynne & Parese

The insurance industry has proven to be “cutting-edge” in one regard. They are fully embracing the use of remote work and AI to cut staffing and increase profits. As many of you are aware, many carrier’s are insisting on using – and oftentimes **only** using – photo estimates to prepare their estimates. They will rely on a few cell phone pictures from the customer or a hired gun to justify exorbitant deductions from a total loss payment or repair estimate.

Preparing estimates this way can be dangerous. Many needed repairs are often missed. The reliance on photo estimates has become all the more dangerous as AI is being increasingly utilized to prepare estimates from these photos. The problem is further exacerbated by the reality that trying to get an appraiser to actually come out to your shop (and physically inspect a vehicle in person) has become a herculean task that can often take weeks. However, the language and spirit of our laws and regulations clearly seem to contemplate the need for physical inspections. The next time you are struggling to get an appraiser to come down to your shop, the below regulations may help demonstrate that the law is on your side:

appraiser to come down to your shop, the below regulations may help demonstrate that the law is on your side:

- **Regulation 38a-790-4:** an appraiser is required to “leave a copy” of the appraisal with the shop. The rule doesn’t say: “mail” a copy or “send” a copy; it says “leave” a copy, implying that the appraiser is actually at the shop.
- **Regulation 38a-790-5:** states that “no competitive estimates shall be obtained by the use of photographs, telephone calls *or in any manner other than a personal inspection.*”
- **Regulation 38a-790-7:** requires a licensed appraiser’s physical inspection on any requests for supplement. These rules make sense, but it wouldn’t make sense that a physical inspection would only be helpful in the context of a competitive estimate or request for supplement. What about all the preliminary safety considerations that are ignored without a physical inspection? If the insurer still insists on a photo estimate, request a supplement and physical inspection for whatever is missed on the photo estimate.
- **Regulation 38a-790-8:** makes it clear that an appraiser must make a fair and impartial appraisal, disregard any efforts on the part of others (including insurance companies) to influence the appraiser’s judgment and to prepare an independent appraisal.

Insurance companies will continue to be more and more aggressive in utilizing whatever tools and technologies will maximize profits, regardless of the implications for vehicle repair and safety. Make sure you are doing your diligence and advocating for both your shop and customer.

Christopher D. Hernandez, Esq. is an Associate with the law firm of Buckley Wynne & Parese and works with John M. Parese, Esq., who 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 Hernandez’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 Hernandez’s articles, you are encouraged to contact Attorney Hernandez directly.

Technicians want proper equipment, paid vacation, and retirement funds survey results show

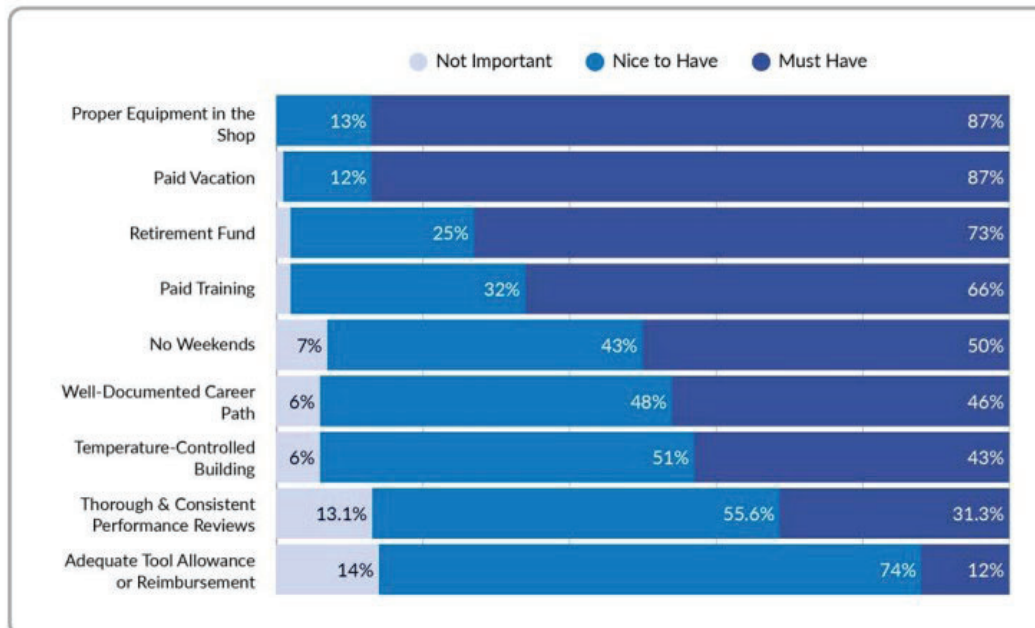


The top three things that technicians want from their employer are proper equipment in the shop, paid vacation, and a retirement fund, according to new data from WrenchWay and the National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence (ASE).

The 2026 Voice of Technician Report found that proper equipment in the shop tied with paid vacation as the top things technicians and students felt an employer must offer.

Eighty seven percent of the 5,500 respondents said equipment and paid vacation were must-haves, while 13% said equipment is nice to have, and 12% said paid vacation is nice to have.

What Technicians & Students Look For in Employers



When the data is separated by working technicians and students, paid vacation was the top choice for 90% of technicians. Only 47% of students said this was a must.

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However, 85% of students and 87% of techs said that proper equipment was a must-have.

The survey was distributed online from Nov. 10 to Dec. 22 to technicians (59%), shop owners and managers (15%), instructors (20%), and students (4%) working in the automotive, diesel, or collision industries.

Retirement came in third with 73% of respondents saying it is a must-have, and 25% saying it's nice to have. When separating technicians from students, 74% of technicians and 68% of students said it was a must-have.

Paid training followed with 66% saying it is a must-have and 32% saying it is nice to have. The data showed that 67% of techs and 55% of students thought it was a must-have.

The survey also asked about preferred pay structures. Forty-one percent of respondents said they preferred hourly or salary pay with a production bonus.

Another 23% said they wanted hourly or salary pay, and 22% wanted a flat rate with a guarantee.

There was a noticeable difference in the responses based on the type of shop technicians worked at.

Forty-three percent of independent shop employees had a preference for hourly or salary with a production bonus, while 43% of dealership technicians also wanted a production bonus option, along with franchise and chain technicians (46%).

Yet, fleet technicians (69%) favored hourly or a salary with no production bonus. Respondents also said they want a more flexible schedule compared to a 40-hour, five-day work schedule.

Thirty-five percent of respondents said they wanted a four-day work week with 10-hour days, while 26% said they wanted a traditional five-day work week.

Overall, 38% said they would accept either option as long as they didn't have to work weekends.

The survey also explored how technicians feel about their current employers. Only 56% of respondents agreed their shop provides fair compensation, the survey found. This is down 2% from last year.

Twenty-seven percent said their shop offers a clear career path, and 23% report receiving thorough and consistent performance reviews.

According to the report, the data show a clear, persistent gap between what technicians say is important and satisfaction with their current employers.

Only 49% of respondents said their shop provides good benefits, and only 57% said it provides what they need.

Another 49% of respondents said that their shop provides good benefits.

Tool allowances also showed a large gap, with 85% of technicians saying this was important and 14% of shops providing it.

Technicians continue to say they're unlikely to recommend their career to a friend, with a net promoter score (NPS) only becoming more negative in recent years.

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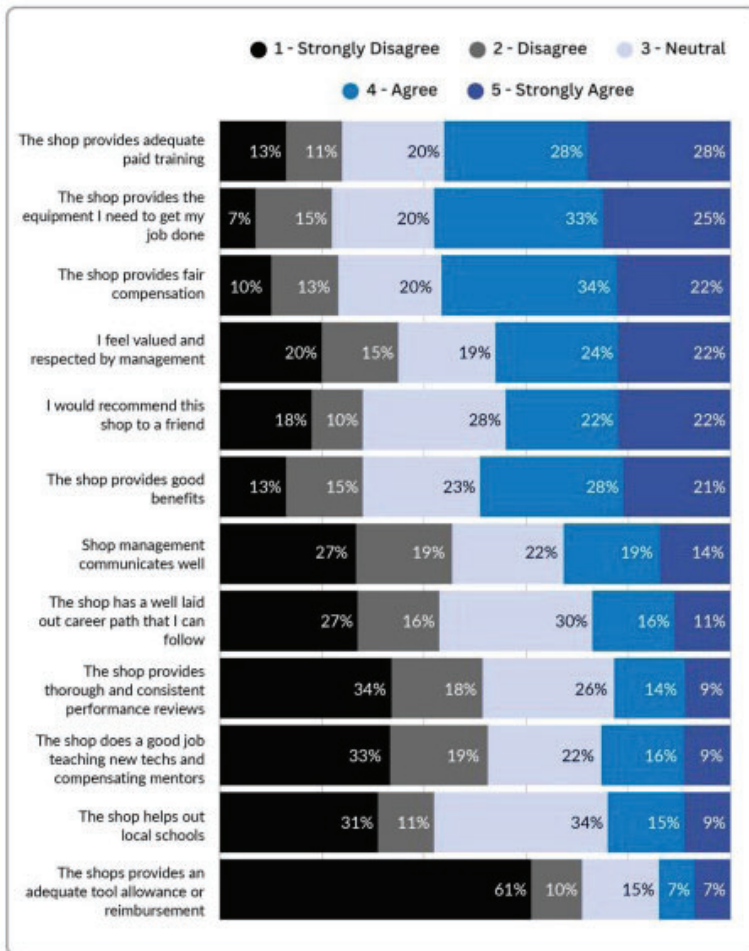
Only 10% of respondents in 2026 were likely to promote the career, with 20% being passive and 70% detracting. The promoter score was 12%, with 24% passive and 64% detracting in 2025.

In 2024, 21% percent promoted their career, 35% were passive, and 45% detracted.

Dealership employees were the least likely to promote at 5%, followed by franchise or chain shops at 13%. Technicians were slightly more likely to promote an independent (14%) or fleet (16%) shop.

When asked to rank a list of urgent industry issues, 84% of respondents said higher pay. Another 71% said a better pay structure.

Technician Satisfaction with Current Employer



These two items rose to the top, followed by better management, which received significantly less interest at 15%.

When asked if the industry is improving overall, 77% of respondents said no. Independent shop technicians had the most hope, with 34% saying they do see improvement.

While respondents may have a negative outlook on the future, a majority (62%) said they plan to remain in the industry, and 43% said they will probably remain in the industry.

Yet, 1 in 5 or 21% said they will probably leave the industry, and another 17% expect to retire.

“The industry needs to ensure that today’s workforce does not shift into the ‘likely to leave’ category,” the report says. “Sustaining the technician pipeline will require addressing the issues driving negative perceptions, such as pay, benefits, workload, and career development, so more technicians see a future for themselves in the industry.”

Source: www.repairerdrivennews.com

Article by Teresa Moss



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