

I went to Washington, DC on Wednesday to work with Aaron Schulenburg, Executive Director of the Society of Collision Specialists (SCRS), as we met with some South Carolina members of Congress. Mike Tongour, who also happens to be from South Carolina works in DC as a member of SCRS's lobby team. He has been working with SCRS on preserving the 1963 Consent Decree which had been proposed for termination by the Department of Justice. Mike, Aaron, and I met with the following members of Congress:

Congressman Tom Rice represents Myrtle Beach, Conway, and Georgetown area  
Senator Tim Scott who represents the entire state

Congressman William Timmons who represents Greenville, Spartanburg, Newberry area

Congressman Joe Wilson who represents Lexington, Cayce, Aiken area

Congressman Jeff Duncan who represents Anderson, Clemson, and Clinton area

Congressman Ralph Norman who represents Kershaw County, Lancaster, Fairfield, Chester, Union, and York

Ryan Dattilo, Judiciary Chairman, is in Senator Lindsay Graham's office and is the top staff attorney in the antitrust area

In each of these meetings, we were fortunate to meet directly with the Congressmen, with the exception of Congressman Tom Rice. We met with his staff member since he was unavailable. However, I was able personally spend some time with Senator Scott prior to meeting with his staff. The Senator was very gracious and appeared supportive of our efforts. He owned an Allstate Agency for 15 years prior to his becoming a Senator so he knew how this bill would affect consumers, collision shops, and employees. Mike, Aaron, and I met with Senator Scott's staff after the meet and greet. We all felt the meetings went well and hope we can count on his support.

The 1963 Consent Decree was an agreement established between insurers and the Department of Justice that the insurance industry is permanently barred from among other things, placing into effect any plan, program or practice that has the purpose or effect of sponsoring, endorsing or otherwise recommending any appraiser of damage to automotive vehicles; directing, advising or otherwise suggesting that any person or firm do business or refuse to do business with (a)

any appraiser of damage to automotive vehicles with respect to the appraisal of such damage, or (b) any independent or dealer franchised automotive repair shop with respect to the repair of damage to automotive vehicles; exercising any control over the activities of any appraiser of damage to automotive vehicles; allocating or dividing customers, territories, markets or business among any appraisers of damage to automotive vehicles; or fixing, establishing, maintaining or otherwise controlling the prices to be paid for the appraisal of damage to automotive vehicles, or to be charged by independent or dealer franchised automotive repair shops for the repair of damage to automotive vehicles or for replacement parts or labor in connection therewith, whether by coercion, boycott or intimidation or by the use of flat rate or parts manuals or otherwise.

The Department of Justice is reviewing all Consent Decree's which do not have end dates with the view of terminating those which are outdated and not applicable unless modern relevance can be established. We explained to the Congressmen and Senator Scott that if this bill was repealed how it would negatively affect collision shops, their employees, and the consumer. We stressed how the Consent Decree helps to foster and ensure independence in the collision repair and appraisal fields, and preserve fundamental practices that serve the consumer well.

We asked the Congressmen and Senator Scott to send a letter to the Judicial Department expressing their desire to keep this Consent Decree on the books as it's still relevant in today's world. We asked Senator Graham's counsel to call the DOJ and tell them he and his boss have heard from our association and has heard the concerns of small businesses like the ones we represent and to ask them where this issue currently stands. All in all, the meetings went very well, and served as a great example of why having an association is so important.

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