

# 2014: Right to Repair MOU Celebrates a Victory and the Beginning of Effort to Address New Industry Challenges

**POSTED BY AARON LOWE ON JANUARY 27, 2014**

Yes, it is finally done. You have probably read by now that AAIA and the Coalition for Auto Repair Equality (CARE) announced that a memorandum of understanding (MOU) had been signed with the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers and the Association of Global Automakers regarding the Motor Vehicle Owners' Right to Repair Act. The MOU ends a more than 12-year battle between the aftermarket and the car companies over a law that would require car companies to provide our independent repair industry and consumers access to all of the tools, software and information needed to repair today's and tomorrow's computer controlled vehicles.

The MOU follows quickly on the passage by the Massachusetts legislature of Right to Repair legislation late in 2013; and the overwhelming approval by Massachusetts voters of a Right to Repair referendum in November 2012. The MOU means that the car companies have agreed to abide by the requirements encompassed by the Massachusetts Right to Repair legislation on a nationwide basis.

While this is a significant development for the independent aftermarket and a victory our industry should celebrate, it is by no means the end of the story. Vehicle technology is rapidly evolving and the technicians working in the independent aftermarket will need to be properly trained to provide the level of service demanded by their customers. Further, as I said last week, our industry must be able to access vehicle embedded telematic systems in order to be competitive with new car dealers who see these new systems as way to develop a relationship with the car owner long past when the new car warranty expires.

The following are a few points that the aftermarket take away from the recent Right to Repair victory in order to address these challenges.

The independent aftermarket is much stronger and more important to the nation's infrastructure than it thinks it is. The passage of the Right to Repair referendum in Massachusetts by a whopping 85-15 percent margin demonstrates that the motoring public definitely sees our industry as an important part of their lives, voting to ensure that competition in the repair industry is preserved. This knowledge should bring about a

sense of pride and the confidence to continue the battle for competition, as well a sense of responsibility to ensure that our technicians are ready to take on the challenges of repairing these high tech vehicles.

We must not back away from the future challenges posed by training and telematics. Both of these issues will either require cooperation from the car companies or another legislative battle. It is my hope that we have had enough of the latter and that the car companies will work with the independents as partners in addressing the needs of their customers and will seek to work with us to achieve a competitive level playing field. Right to Repair was a team effort. The battle over access to service information was not really won over at the negotiating table, but from the strong efforts of members of our industry who gave of their time, energy and money to lobby for passage of Right to Repair legislation. Many of these were small businesses owners or technicians who were willing to give up their evenings and weekends and sometimes leave their busy shops to meet with legislators on this issue. This victory would not have happened without their commitment. Now, we are going to need additional help from the industry to help tackle these future challenges.

To those who say that the MOU does not go far enough: We agree, more needs to be done. However, the effort in Massachusetts and the MOU establish the fact that the consumer who purchased a vehicle also should have the right to have that vehicle repaired where they want and by whom. They further should have the right to determine where any information transmitted by that vehicle is sent. Hopefully, the industry buoyed by the Right to Repair victory, will now vow to move forward, together, to ensure its competitive future.