National Automobile Dealers Association

Protect Consumers and Small Businesses from Catalytic Converter Theft

Cosponsor the Bipartisan PART Act (H.R. 5221/S. 2238)

ISSUE

Catalytic converters are attractive targets for thieves due to their precious metals, such as rhodium, platinum and palladium. Criminals can easily steal catalytic converters from unattended vehicles, and since catalytic converters are not readily traceable, there is a lucrative market for these stolen parts. These thefts are costing millions of dollars to businesses and individual vehicle owners alike and continue to be a significant problem. The PART Act allows officers to trace stolen converters back to specific vehicles while establishing record-keeping transparency to curb illicit activity. **Members of Congress should cosponsor the Preventing Auto Recycling Theft Act (H.R. 5221/S. 2238), which would help law enforcement combat catalytic converter theft by requiring traceable identification on catalytic converters and create a more transparent market that deters their theft.**

BACKGROUND

As required by the Clean Air Act, catalytic converters reduce toxic emissions from internal combustion engine vehicles using precious metals to remove toxic elements from the exhaust gases. The price of these precious metals rose sharply during the pandemic, contributing to a sharp increase in theft. Stolen catalytic converters can garner anywhere from $20 to $350 on the black market, with the replacement cost to vehicle owners averaging over $2,500. These stolen parts are difficult to trace since they lack identification numbers tied to the vehicle, which hampers law enforcement from proving ownership and prosecuting theft.

Thefts have also turned violent, with high-profile tragedies underscoring the urgency of addressing this issue. While several states have enacted laws to address the issue, this crime frequently involves trafficking stolen parts across state lines. A federal framework is needed to aid the efforts of local law enforcement.

The PART Act addresses this crime by: 1) requiring new vehicles to have unique identifying numbers, a VIN or other traceable number, on catalytic converters at the time of assembly; 2) establishing a $7 million grant program to mark catalytic converters of vehicles already on the road at no cost to vehicle owners; 3) increasing record keeping requirements for purchasers; and 4) establishing a federal criminal penalty for the theft, sale, trafficking or known purchase of stolen catalytic converters of up to five years.

KEY POINTS

- **Catalytic converter theft increased significantly after the pandemic** due to the precious metals contained in each device, and continues to be a national problem for small businesses and vehicle owners.
- **The PART Act would provide law enforcement the tools to trace stolen catalytic converters back to their source.** Catalytic converters are not one of the 18 vehicle parts required by federal law to be marked with a VIN for anti-theft purposes. Law enforcement has stated that including such tracing in the legislation is critical since it would make it easier to prosecute criminals and help deter the theft and trafficking of stolen catalytic converters.
- **The rigorously reviewed PART Act provides a strong national framework to help law enforcement combat catalytic converter theft.** Since this crime frequently involves trafficking stolen parts across state lines, a federal standard is needed to help law enforcement's theft prevention efforts.

STATUS

The PART Act was reintroduced by Sens. Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.) and Bernie Moreno (R-Ohio). Reps. Jim Baird (R-Ind.) and Betty McCollum (D-Minn.) introduced companion legislation in the House. NADA and 28 other organizations, including law enforcement organizations, sent a letter to Congress supporting passage of the PART Act earlier this year. The House Commerce, Manufacturing, and Trade Subcommittee forwarded H.R. 5221 to the Energy and Commerce Committee on Feb. 10 by voice vote. **Members are urged to cosponsor the PART Act to help curb the national problem of catalytic converter theft and protect consumers.**

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