



Press Release

William W. Monning

Assemblymember, Representing the 27th District

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Legislation to Stop Rental Car Companies from Renting Recalled Cars Introduced

(Sacramento, CA) – On Wednesday, March 23, 2011, Assemblymember Bill Monning (D-Carmel), auto safety advocates, and Carol Houck, mother of two daughters killed by an Enterprise rental car that was under a federal safety recall, announced the introduction of Assembly Bill (AB) 753 to prohibit rental car companies from renting vehicles to the public until the safety recall work has been performed.

“AB 753 is needed to ensure that the Houck tragedy does not happen again. A consumer should be able to rent a car without worrying about safety issues that should have already been fixed,” stated Monning. “While some rental car companies have changed their policies as a result of this case, legislation is still necessary to ensure that all rental car companies operate under the same rules.”

Existing federal and state laws leave loopholes allowing rental car companies to rent out cars that are being recalled due to safety defects, or that fail to comply with federal safety standards. Federal law already prohibits auto dealers from selling new cars that are being recalled.

“I welcome a bill that would prevent the sort of tragedy that took my daughters’ lives. No other family should have to endure the heartbreaking loss of loved ones because of an unsafe rental car,” said Carol Houck. AB 753 is being carried on behalf of her daughters, Raechel and Jacqueline, who were killed in a Chrysler PT Cruiser. Enterprise received notice from Chrysler that the PT Cruiser was being recalled about one month before the fatal crash due to a defect in the steering, making it prone to catching fire and leading to a loss of steering control. Instead of grounding the car, Enterprise continued to rent it to three unsuspecting consumers before renting it to the Houck sisters. The young women were riding from Santa Cruz to visit their parent in Ojai. Not only were they not informed about the safety defect, they were led to believe that they were getting an “upgraded” car.

“Rental car companies should not be allowed to put their customers’ lives in jeopardy to make a paltry rental fee,” said Rosemary Shahan, President of Consumers for Auto Reliability and Safety, who is sponsoring AB 753.

Under federal law, motor vehicles are subject to mandatory safety recalls for two reasons:

- They have a defect that poses an “unreasonable risk” to the public.
- They fail to comply with mandatory federal safety standards.

“Everyday consumers rent cars with the expectation that the vehicles have been fully inspected for safety. Finding that this is not the case and that rental car companies knowingly put individuals and families at potentially lethal risk by renting cars subject to safety recalls, is unconscionable. If consumers knew that rental car companies were playing Russian Roulette with their lives, they may think twice about renting cars in the future,” stated Elisa Odabashian with Consumers Union.

Assemblymember Monning was first elected to represent the 27th Assembly District in 2008 and re-elected in 2010. The 27th Assembly District includes portions of Monterey, Santa Clara and Santa Cruz Counties. Prior to his election to the Assembly, Assemblymember Monning was a professor at the Monterey College of Law and a Professor of International Negotiation and Conflict Resolution at the Monterey Institute of International Studies.

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