AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY JUNE 15, 2009

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY MAY 18, 2009

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY MAY 12, 2009

AMENDED IN SENATE APRIL 2, 2009

SENATE BILL No. 424

Introduced by Senators Padilla, Florez, and Harman

(~~Coauthor: Assembly Member Fuentes~~ *Coauthors: Assembly Members Eng, Fuentes, and Solorio*)

February 26, 2009

An act to *amend Section 11713.1 of, and to* add Section 11713.13 to the Vehicle Code, relating to, vehicles, and declaring the urgency thereof, to take effect immediately.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 424, as amended, Padilla. Vehicles: manufacturers and distributors.

(1) Existing law makes it a violation of the Vehicle Code for the holder of a vehicle dealer's license to commit specified actions, including, among other things, to advertise for sale, sell, or purchase for resale a new vehicle of a line-make for which the dealer does not hold a franchise. Existing law also lists various exceptions to this requirement.

This bill would expand the list of existing exceptions to also include a vehicle acquired in the ordinary course of business as a new vehicle by a dealer franchised to sell that vehicle if specified conditions are met, including if the manufacturer or distributor of the vehicle files a bankruptcy petition.

~~(1)~~

(2) Existing law generally requires a manufacturer, manufacturer branch, remanufacturer, remanufacturer branch, distributor, distributor branch, transporter, or dealer of vehicles to be licensed by the Department of Motor Vehicles. Under existing law, it is unlawful for a manufacturer, manufacturer branch, distributor, or distributor branch to, among other things, dishonor a warranty, rebate, or other incentive offered to the public or a dealer, as specified, or to unfairly discriminate in favor of a dealership owned or controlled, in whole or part, by a manufacturer or an entity that controls or is controlled by a manufacturer or distributor.

This bill would prohibit a manufacturer, manufacturer branch, distributor, or distributor branch from preventing, or attempting to prevent, by contract or otherwise, a dealer from acquiring, adding, or maintaining a sales or service operation for another line-make of motor vehicles at the same or expanded facility at which the dealer currently operates a dealership if the dealer complies with any reasonable facilities and capital requirements of the manufacturer or distributor or from requiring a dealer to establish or maintain exclusive facilities, personnel, or display space if the imposition of the requirement would be unreasonable in light of all existing circumstances, including economic conditions. In any proceeding under these provisions in which the reasonableness of a facility requirement is an issue, the manufacturer or distributor would have the burden of proof.

The bill would also prohibit additional specified unlawful acts by a manufacturer, manufacturer branch, distributor, or distributor branch against a dealer.

~~(2)~~

(3) Under existing law, a violation of the above provisions relating to occupational licensing and business regulations in the Vehicle Code is a misdemeanor.

Because this bill would create a new crime, it would impose a state-mandated local program.

~~(3)~~

(4) The California Constitution requires the state to reimburse local agencies and school districts for certain costs mandated by the state. Statutory provisions establish procedures for making that reimbursement.

This bill would provide that no reimbursement is required by this act for a specified reason.

~~(4)~~

(5) This bill would declare that it is to take effect immediately as an urgency statute.

Vote: $\frac{2}{3}$. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: yes. State-mandated local program: yes.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

(a) The distribution, sale, and service of new motor vehicles in the State of California vitally affects the general economy of this state and the public welfare.

(b) The new motor vehicle franchise system, which operates within a strictly defined and highly regulated statutory scheme, assures the consuming public of a well-organized distribution system for the availability and sale of new motor vehicles throughout the state; provides a network of quality warranty, recall, and repair facilities to maintain those vehicles; and creates a cost-effective method for the state to police those systems through the licensing and regulation of private sector franchisors and franchisees.

(c) Since January of 2008, over 170 new motor vehicle dealerships have closed their doors in California. These closures have resulted in job losses, diminished sales tax and other tax revenues, and a reduction in the number of new motor vehicle dealerships that service the consuming public.

(d) It is the intent of this act to ensure that facility requirements imposed by franchisors are reasonable, that assistance for dealers upon termination, nonrenewal, or cancellation of a franchise is adequate, and that dealers are properly indemnified for actions of auto manufacturers or distributors that are beyond the control of dealers.

SEC. 2. Section 11713.1 of the Vehicle Code is amended to read:

11713.1. It is a violation of this code for the holder of a dealer's license issued under this article to do any of the following:

(a) Advertise a specific vehicle for sale without identifying the vehicle by its model, model-year, and either its license number or that portion of the vehicle identification number that distinguishes the vehicle from all other vehicles of the same make, model, and model-year. Model-year is not required to be advertised for current model-year vehicles. Year models are no longer current when ensuing year models are available for purchase at retail in California. Any advertisement that offers for sale a class of new vehicles in a dealer's inventory, consisting of five or more vehicles, that are all of the same make, model, and model-year is not required to include in the advertisement the vehicle identification numbers or license numbers of those vehicles.

(b) Advertise the total price of a vehicle without including all costs to the purchaser at time of sale, except taxes, vehicle registration fees, the California tire fee, as defined in Section 42885 of the Public Resources Code, emission testing fees not exceeding fifty dollars ($50), actual fees charged for certificates pursuant to Section 44060 of the Health and Safety Code, finance charges, and any dealer document preparation charge. The dealer document preparation charge shall not exceed fifty-five dollars ($55).

(c) (1) Exclude from an advertisement of a vehicle for sale that there will be added to the advertised total price at the time of sale, charges for sales tax, vehicle registration fees, the California tire fee, the fee charged by the state for the issuance of a certificate of compliance or noncompliance pursuant to a statute, finance charges, and a dealer document preparation charge.

(2) The obligations imposed by paragraph (1) are satisfied by adding to the advertisement a statement containing no abbreviations and that is worded in substantially the following form: "Plus government fees and taxes, any finance charges, any dealer document preparation charge, and any emission testing charge."

(3) For purposes of paragraph (1), "advertisement" means an advertisement in a newspaper, magazine, or direct mail publication that is two or more columns in width or one column in width and more than seven inches in length, or on a Web page of a dealer's *Internet* Web site that displays the price of a vehicle offered for sale on the Internet, as that term is defined in paragraph (6) of subdivision (e) of Section 17538 of the Business and Professions Code.

(d) Represent the dealer document preparation charge or certificate of compliance or noncompliance fee, as a governmental fee.

(e) Fail to sell a vehicle to a person at the advertised total price, exclusive of taxes, vehicle registration fees, the California tire fee, the fee charged by the state for the issuance of a certificate of compliance or noncompliance pursuant to a statute, finance charges, mobilehome escrow fees, the amount of a city, county, or city and county imposed fee or tax for a mobilehome, and a dealer document preparation charge, which charges shall not exceed fifty-five dollars ($55) for the document preparation charge and not to exceed fifty dollars ($50) for emission testing plus the actual fees charged for certificates pursuant to Section 44060 of the Health and Safety Code, while the vehicle remains unsold, unless the advertisement states the advertised total price is good only for a specified time and the time has elapsed. Advertised vehicles shall be sold at or below the advertised total price, with statutorily permitted exclusions, regardless of whether the purchaser has knowledge of the advertised total price.

(f) (1) Advertise for sale, sell, or purchase for resale a new vehicle of a line-make for which the dealer does not hold a franchise.

(2) This subdivision does not apply to a transaction involving the following:

(A) A mobilehome.

(B) A recreational vehicle as defined in Section 18010 of the Health and Safety Code.

(C) A commercial coach, as defined in Section 18001.8 of the Health and Safety Code.

(D) An off-highway motor vehicle subject to identification as defined in Section 38012.

(E) A manufactured home.

(F) A new vehicle that will be substantially altered or modified by a converter prior to resale.

(G) A commercial vehicle with a gross vehicle weight rating of more than 10,000 pounds.

(H) A vehicle purchased for export and exported outside the territorial limits of the United States without being registered with the department.

(I) A vehicle acquired in the ordinary course of business as a new vehicle by a dealer franchised to sell that vehicle, if all of the following apply:

(i) The manufacturer or distributor of the vehicle files a bankruptcy petition.

(ii) The franchise agreement of the dealer is terminated, canceled, or rejected by the manufacturer or distributor as part of the bankruptcy proceedings and the termination, cancellation, or rejection is not a result of the revocation by the department of the dealer's license or the dealer's conviction of a crime.

(iii) The vehicle is held in the inventory of the dealer on the date the bankruptcy petition is filed.

(iv) The vehicle is sold by the dealer within six months of the date the bankruptcy petition is filed.

(3) Subparagraph (I) of paragraph (2) does not entitle a dealer whose franchise agreement has been terminated, canceled, or rejected to continue to perform warranty service repairs or continue to be eligible to offer or receive consumer or dealer incentives offered by the manufacturer or distributor.

(g) Sell a park trailer, as specified in Section 18009.3 of the Health and Safety Code, without disclosing in writing to the purchaser that a park trailer is required to be moved by a transporter or a licensed manufacturer or dealer under a permit issued by the Department of Transportation or a local authority with respect to highways under their respective jurisdictions.

(h) Advertise free merchandise, gifts, or services provided by a dealer contingent on the purchase of a vehicle. "Free" includes merchandise or services offered for sale at a price less than the seller's cost of the merchandise or services.

(i) (1) Advertise vehicles, and related goods or services, at a specified dealer price, with the intent not to supply reasonably expectable demand, unless the advertisement discloses the number of vehicles in stock at the advertised price. In addition, whether or not there are sufficient vehicles in stock to supply a reasonably expectable demand, when phrases such as "starting at," "from," "beginning as low as," or words of similar import are used in reference to an advertised price, the advertisement shall disclose the number of vehicles available at that advertised price.

(2) For purposes of this subdivision, in a newspaper advertisement for a vehicle that is two model-years old or newer, the actual phrase that states the number of vehicles in stock at the advertised price shall be printed in a type size that is at least equal to one-quarter of the type size, and in the same style and color of type, used for the advertised price. However, in no case shall the phrase be printed in less than 8-point type size, and the phrase

shall be disclosed immediately above, below, or beside the advertised price without intervening words, pictures, marks, or symbols.

(3) The disclosure required by this subdivision is in addition to any other disclosure required by this code or any regulation regarding identifying vehicles advertised for sale.

(j) Use "rebate" or similar words, including, but not limited to, "cash back," in advertising the sale of a vehicle unless the rebate is expressed in a specific dollar amount and is in fact a rebate offered by the vehicle manufacturer or distributor directly to the retail purchaser of the vehicle or to the assignee of the retail purchaser.

(k) Require a person to pay a higher price for a vehicle and related goods or services for receiving advertised credit terms than the cash price the same person would have to pay to purchase the same vehicle and related goods or services. For the purpose of this subdivision, "cash price" has the meaning as defined in subdivision (e) of Section 2981 of the Civil Code.

(*l*) Advertise a guaranteed trade-in allowance.

(m) Misrepresent the authority of a salesperson, representative, or agent to negotiate the final terms of a transaction.

(n) (1) Use "invoice," "dealer's invoice," "wholesale price," or similar terms that refer to a dealer's cost for a vehicle in an advertisement for the sale of a vehicle or advertise that the selling price of a vehicle is above, below, or at either of the following:

(A) The manufacturer's or distributor's invoice price to a dealer.

(B) A dealer's cost.

(2) This subdivision does not apply to either of the following:

(A) A communication occurring during face-to-face negotiations for the purchase of a specific vehicle if the prospective purchaser initiates a discussion of the vehicle's invoice price or the dealer's cost for that vehicle.

(B) A communication between a dealer and a prospective commercial purchaser that is not disseminated to the general public. For purposes of this subparagraph, a "commercial purchaser" means a dealer, lessor, lessor-retailer, manufacturer, remanufacturer, distributor, financial institution, governmental entity, or person who purchases 10 or more vehicles during a year.

(o) Violate a law prohibiting bait and switch advertising, including, but not limited to, the guides against bait advertising set forth in Part 238 (commencing with Section 238) of Title 16 of the Code of Federal Regulations, as those regulations read on January 1, 1988.

(p) Make an untrue or misleading statement indicating that a vehicle is equipped with all the factory-installed optional equipment the manufacturer offers, including, but not limited to, a false statement that a vehicle is "fully factory equipped."

(q) Affix on a new vehicle a supplemental price sticker containing a price that represents the dealer's asking price that exceeds the manufacturer's suggested retail price unless all of the following occur:

(1) The supplemental sticker clearly and conspicuously discloses in the largest print appearing on the sticker, other than the print size used for the dealer's name, that the supplemental sticker price is the dealer's asking price, or words of similar import, and that it is not the manufacturer's suggested retail price.

(2) The supplemental sticker clearly and conspicuously discloses the manufacturer's suggested retail price.

(3) The supplemental sticker lists each item that is not included in the manufacturer's suggested retail price, and discloses the additional price of each item. If the supplemental sticker price is greater than the sum of the manufacturer's suggested retail price and the price of the items added by the dealer, the supplemental sticker price shall set forth that difference and describe it as "added mark-up."

(r) Advertise an underselling claim, including, but not limited to, "we have the lowest prices" or "we will beat any dealer's price," unless the dealer has conducted a recent survey showing that the dealer sells its vehicles at lower prices than another licensee in its trade area and maintains records to adequately substantiate the claims. The substantiating records shall be made available to the department upon request.

(s) (1) Advertise an incentive offered by the manufacturer or distributor if the dealer is required to contribute to the cost of the incentive as a condition of participating in the incentive program, unless the dealer discloses in a clear and conspicuous manner that dealer participation may affect consumer cost.

(2) For purposes of this subdivision, "incentive" means anything of value offered to induce people to purchase a vehicle, including,

but not limited to, discounts, savings claims, rebates, below-market finance rates, and free merchandise or services.

(t) Display or offer for sale a used vehicle unless there is affixed to the vehicle the Federal Trade Commission's Buyer's Guide as required by Part 455 of Title 16 of the Code of Federal Regulations.

(u) Fail to disclose in writing to the franchisor of a new motor vehicle dealer the name of the purchaser, date of sale, and the vehicle identification number of each new motor vehicle sold of the line-make of that franchisor, or intentionally submit to that franchisor a false name for the purchaser or false date for the date of sale.

(v) Enter into a contract for the retail sale of a motor vehicle unless the contract clearly and conspicuously discloses whether the vehicle is being sold as a new vehicle or a used vehicle, as defined in this code.

(w) Use a simulated check, as defined in subdivision (a) of Section 22433 of the Business and Professions Code, in an advertisement for the sale or lease of a vehicle.

(x) Fail to disclose, in a clear and conspicuous manner in at least 10-point boldface type on the face of a contract for the retail sale of a new motor vehicle that this transaction is, or is not, subject to a fee received by an autobroker from the selling new motor vehicle dealer, and the name of the autobroker, if applicable.

(y) As used in this section, "make" and "model" have the same meaning as is provided in Section 565.3 of Title 49 of the Code of Federal Regulations.

~~SEC. 2.~~

SEC. 3. Section 11713.13 is added to the Vehicle Code, to read:

11713.13. It is unlawful and a violation of this code for any manufacturer, manufacturer branch, distributor, or distributor branch licensed under this code to do, directly or indirectly through an affiliate, any of the following:

(a) Prevent, or attempt to prevent, by contract or otherwise, a dealer from acquiring, adding, or maintaining a sales or service operation for another line make of motor vehicles at the same or expanded facility at which the dealer currently operates a dealership if the dealer complies with any reasonable facilities and capital requirements of the manufacturer or distributor.

(b) Require a dealer to establish or maintain exclusive facilities, personnel, or display space if the imposition of the requirement would be unreasonable in light of all existing circumstances, including economic conditions. In any proceeding under this subdivision or subdivision (a) in which the reasonableness of a facility or capital requirement is an issue, the manufacturer or distributor shall have the burden of proof.

(c) Require, by contract or otherwise, a dealer to make a material alteration, expansion, or addition to any dealership facility, unless the required alteration, expansion, or addition is reasonable in light of all existing circumstances, including economic conditions. In any proceeding in which a required facility alteration, expansion, or addition is an issue, the manufacturer or distributor shall have the burden of proof.

(d) (1) Fail to pay to a dealer, within 90 days of termination, cancellation, or nonrenewal of a franchise, all of the following:

(A) The dealer cost, plus any charges made by the manufacturer or distributor for vehicle distribution or delivery and the cost of any dealer-installed original equipment accessories, less any amount invoiced to the vehicle and paid by the manufacturer or distributor to the dealer, for all new and undamaged vehicles with less than 500 miles in the dealer's inventory that were acquired by the dealer from the manufacturer, distributor, or another new motor vehicle dealer franchised to sell vehicles of the same line-make, in the ordinary course of business, within 18 months of termination, cancellation, or nonrenewal of the franchise.

(B) The dealer cost for all unused and undamaged supplies, parts, and accessories listed in the manufacturer's current parts catalog and in their original packaging, except that sheet metal may be packaged in a comparable substitute for the original package.

(C) The fair market value of each undamaged sign owned by the motor vehicle dealer and bearing a common name, trade name, or trademark of the manufacturer or distributor if acquisition of the sign was required or made a condition of participation in an incentive program by the manufacturer or distributor.

(D) The fair market value of all special tools, computer systems, and equipment that were required or made a condition of participation in an incentive program by the manufacturer or distributor that are in usable condition, excluding normal wear and tear.

(E) The dealer costs of handling, packing, loading, and transporting any items or inventory for repurchase by the manufacturer or distributor.

(2) This subdivision does not apply to a franchisor of a dealer of new recreational vehicles, as defined in subdivision (a) of Section 18010 of the Health and Safety Code.

(3) This subdivision does not apply to a termination that is implemented as a result of the sale of substantially all of the inventory and fixed assets or stock of a franchised dealership if the dealership continues to operate as a franchisee of the same line-make.

(e) (1) (A) Fail to pay to a dealer of new recreational vehicles, as defined in subdivision (a) of Section 18010 of the Health and Safety Code, within 90 days of termination, cancellation, or nonrenewal of a franchise for a recreational vehicle line-make, as defined in Section 3072.5, the dealer cost, plus any charges made by the manufacturer or distributor for vehicle distribution or delivery and the cost of any dealer-installed original equipment accessories, less any amount invoiced to the vehicle and paid by the manufacturer or distributor to the dealer, for a new recreational vehicle when the termination, cancellation, or nonrenewal is initiated by a recreational vehicle manufacturer. This paragraph only applies to new and unused recreational vehicles that do not currently have or have had in the past, material damage, as defined in Section 9990, and that the dealer acquired from the manufacturer, distributor, or another new motor vehicle dealer franchised to sell recreational vehicles of the same line-make in the ordinary course of business within 12 months of the termination, cancellation, or nonrenewal of the franchise.

(B) For those recreational vehicles with odometers, paragraph (1) shall apply to only those vehicles that have no more than 1,500 miles on the odometer, in addition to the number of miles incurred while delivering the vehicle from the manufacturer's facility that produced the vehicle for delivery to the dealer's retail location.

(C) Damaged recreational vehicles shall be repurchased by the manufacturer provided there is an offset in value for damages, except recreational vehicles that have or had material damage, as defined in Section 9990, may be repurchased at the manufacturer's option provided there is an offset in value for damages.

(2) Fail to pay to a dealer of new recreational vehicles, as defined in subdivision (a) of Section 18010 of the Health and Safety Code, within 90 days of termination, cancellation, or nonrenewal of a franchise, all of the following:

(A) The dealer cost for all unused and undamaged supplies, parts, and accessories listed in the manufacturer's current parts catalog and in their original packaging, except that sheet metal may be packaged in a comparable substitute for the original package.

(B) The fair market value of each undamaged sign owned by the motor vehicle dealer and bearing a common name, trade name, or trademark of the manufacturer or distributor if acquisition of the sign was required or made a condition of participation in an incentive program by the manufacturer or distributor.

(C) The fair market value of all special tools, computer systems, and equipment that were required or made a condition of participation in an incentive program by the manufacturer or distributor that are in usable condition, excluding normal wear and tear.

(D) The dealer costs of handling, packing, loading, and transporting any items or inventory for repurchase by the manufacturer or distributor.

(f) (1) Fail, upon demand, to indemnify any existing or former franchisee and the franchisee's successors and assigns from any and all damages sustained and attorney's fees and other expenses reasonably incurred by the franchisee that result from or relate to any claim made or asserted by a third party against the franchisee to the extent the claim results from any of the following:

(A) The condition, characteristics, manufacture, assembly, or design of any vehicle, parts, accessories, tools, or equipment, or the selection or combination of parts or components manufactured or distributed by the manufacturer or distributor.

(B) Service systems, procedures, or methods the franchisor required or recommended the franchisee to use if the franchisee properly uses the system, procedure, or method.

(C) Improper use or disclosure by a manufacturer or distributor of nonpublic personal information obtained from a franchisee concerning any consumer, customer, or employee of the franchisee.

(D) Any act or omission of the manufacturer or distributor for which the franchisee would have a claim for contribution or indemnity under applicable law or under the franchise, irrespective of and without regard to any prior termination or expiration of the franchise.

(2) This subdivision does not limit, in any way, the existing rights, remedies, or recourses available to any person who purchases or leases vehicles at retail.

~~SEC. 3.~~

SEC. 4. No reimbursement is required by this act pursuant to Section 6 of Article XIII B of the California Constitution because the only costs that may be incurred by a local agency or school district will be incurred because this act creates a new crime or infraction, eliminates a crime or infraction, or changes the penalty for a crime or infraction, within the meaning of Section 17556 of the Government Code, or changes the definition of a crime within the meaning of Section 6 of Article XIII B of the California Constitution.

~~SEC. 4.~~

SEC. 5. This act is an urgency statute necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety within the meaning of Article IV of the Constitution and shall go into immediate effect. The facts constituting the necessity are:

In order to permit, as soon as possible, franchised new motor vehicle dealers flexibility to configure their dealership facilities in a manner that will permit them to remain in business and continue to service the needs of their communities, it is necessary that this act take effect immediately.

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