

ON THE ISSUES

Used Car Fraud Costing Americans Billions

by SLADE GORTON
U.S. Senator

Everyday, consumers across the country consider buying used cars. For many, this is a major purchase made possible by saving hard-earned money for years at a time. These people will carefully examine the cars—kick the tires, take them for a test drive, ask the dealer a hundred different questions, and buy the car under the impression that it is in solid working condition.

A few weeks down the road, some of these people will discover that the car they purchased has serious problems they were unaware of when they bought it.

When these unsuspecting consumers take their cars to the shop, they discover that the car they purchased was a lemon-law buy-back or was involved in a serious accident and was subsequently "salvaged," or rebuilt. The

consumer often ends up paying more for the car than it is worth.

Used car fraud is costing American consumers nearly four billion dollars every year. While that figure may seem huge, this kind of fraud poses an even greater problem, on that cannot be measured in dollars and cents. Used car fraud puts thousands of unsafe vehicles in the hands of unsuspecting buyers.

As a result, people end up with cars that have serious engine, transmission, or brake problems that could seriously jeopardize their safety, and the safety of others. In an effort to curb used car fraud, I have introduced legislation which will provide consumers with important information concerning the history of used cars that are either "salvage" or "lemon" vehicles.

Used car fraud occurs because of a lack of uniformity among state titling

laws. Typically, when a car is "totalled" in a crash and subsequently rebuilt, most states require that the titles of these "salvaged" vehicles signify that the vehicle has sustained major damage.

Similarly, when States determine a vehicle to be a "lemon," or when a vehicle is repurchased or replaced because of a defect in the car covered under its warranty, some require that this information is noted on the title.

Despite even the best efforts to let consumer know about the history of the vehicle they are buying, unscrupulous individuals can easily obtain a clean title free of the "salvage" or "lemon" designation. The simply retitle the vehicle in states which do not have such requirements, as current law does not require the new state to carry that information from the previous state's title.

Even fewer states provide for consumer disclosure aside from the information on the vehicles' title—despite the fact that most consumers do not see the vehicle's title until the vehicle has been purchased.

The Used Car Consumer Notification and Reporting Act contains four major provisions:

- Requires the Department of Transportation to establish a nationally uniform certificate of title that will disclose whether the vehicle was a "salvage" or lemon" vehicle,

- Requires all states to carry forward any "salvage" or "lemon" designation from one state's title to the next,

- Provides for a sticker to be placed on "salvage" or "lemon" vehicles which alerts the consumer to the vehicle's history at the point of sale, and
- Requires the Department of Transportation to establish a nationally uniform consumer

disclosure statement that provides further information about the vehicle's "salvage" or "lemon" history.

Our greatest safeguard against consumer fraud is education. When people are able to make decisions with all the facts and pitfalls in clear view, they are no longer defenseless, and certainly less vulnerable.

The Used Car Consumer Notification and Reporting Act will allow consumers to make informed decisions about their used car purchases—and it will play an important role in combating the deceptive and menacing problems of "salvage" and "lemon" fraud.

MUSIC NOTES

G*Wiz: Having Fun With Their Music

In this day and age when most urban groups from South Central Los Angeles are making angry musical statements, G*Wiz want to show the world that there is a light side to the community that they've come from.

"It's no joke, man," says Rascal of the area where he grew up. "It's rough, but it doesn't seem rough after awhile—you get used to it. If you're on the outside looking in, it must seem horrible, but when you're there, it don't seem so bad, cause you're in

there. The media gives South Central a bad rap."

And with their debut E.P. *Naughty Bits*, G*Wiz is presenting their message to the world, it's not a new concept but, it's one that's been forgotten. "We just want to have fun with our music, give people a party" explains Farve, "tell everyone not to take life so seriously all the time."

The group got together two years ago. Jamahl "Jamiz" Harris was "heading in a bad way" until local legend Michael Concepcion took the

youth under his wing.

"Mike told me that he was happy that I was into music" explains the 16 year old rapper/songwriter/producer. "And, that If I stayed with him, in six months time, things would take off for me. And he was right."

Under his guidance, Jamahl formed G*Wiz with friends Ron "Farve" Martin, Craig "Rascal" Cummins, and Kevin "Trick'e" Williams. All agree that music was an outlet for them, a way to channel energy. Growing up in "the hood,"

there was pressure to get into things like gangs and drugs. Music helped them turn potential negative energy into positive energy.

Naughty Bits is the result of that focused energy. The sound is, according to Jamahl "hip-hop with an R&B edge." It's a street sound that isn't soft

or hard, but somewhere in between where the simple message is to have fun.

The first single, "Teddy Bear," is proof that all G*Wiz wants to do is have a good time and share their playfulness. Having fun, on the positive tip, that's what G*Wiz is all about.



G*WIZ

Left to right: Rascal, Farve, Trick'e and Jamahl "Jamiz" Harris

IN THE NEWS

Funding Available for New Veterans Memorials

The Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) is accepting proposals for projects to repair and maintain existing memorials, or for new memorials which pay tribute to veterans.

Funding for such projects comes from proceeds through the Department of Licensing's Veteran Emblem Program. Under this program, veterans may purchase and display emblems representing their military service and commendation on their vehicle license plates.

The proceeds are deposited into a fund which is administered by WDVA and is dedicated to preserving existing veterans memorials or funding new projects which pay tribute to Washington state veterans.

Organizations or groups must meet established criteria and present a proposal in a specific format. The deadline for submitting proposals is August 31, 1993.

For more information, call Sherri Madison at WDVA at 753-4527.

Construction Begins for New Retirement Center

The Episcopal Retirement Homes of Western Washington announced plans to begin construction this month on their \$7.5 million dollar project called St. Paul's Canterbury Manor in Bremerton.

A joint effort by St. Paul's Episcopal Church and Episcopal Retirement Homes, a non-profit corporation, the new community will offer seniors lifestyle that includes a variety of services and

amenities, 24 hour security and home health care available on site.

St. Paul's Canterbury Manor will include 76 private apartments in one and two bedroom floor plans. The residences have been designed to include full kitchens, walk-in closets, patios and other features to enhance the independent lifestyle.

For information regarding the retirement community, call 377-0113.