



Maine Auto Recyclers Association

March 2022

MAINE LEGISLATURE ABOUT TO REQUIRE AUTO RECYCLERS TO MARK VIN NUMBER OR THEIR STOCK NUMBER ON ALL DETACHED CATALYTIC CONVERTERS!

With skyrocketing prices being paid for the precious metal content of catalytic converters, a predictable surge in theft of these parts has followed in Maine, as well as throughout the country. According to law enforcement data collected from 30 of Maine's 134 law enforcement departments, 270 converter thefts took place in 2020 and more than 370 in 2021. And anyone with a battery powered Sawzall could find on social media willing buyers for these stolen goods.

One victim of such thefts was Maine State Senator Jeff Timberlake of Turner, co-owner of Ricker Hill Orchard and a country store, who last spring had the converters stolen from a number of his firm's trucks. Understandably outraged, the Senator – who is also the Republican Minority Leader in the Maine Senate -- filed legislation to severely limit who could sell detached converters. Auto recyclers were not among the authorized sellers. A more recent theft victim was the University of Maine's Diagnostic Laboratory, which over Labor Day weekend had converters stolen from their trucks. Director of the UMaine Laboratory is State Senator Jim Dill, a senior and very respected Democrat, who also filed a bill designed to combat converter theft.

Anyone see handwriting on the wall here?

This is of course a problem not unique to Maine. At last count by our national Automotive Recyclers Association (ARA) at least 45 states are now working on a total of over 120 pieces of proposed legislation to combat theft of catalytic converters. What is most significant here in Maine is the amount of careful work by a large group—from sheriffs to scrap metal yards-- which has gone into our state's soon-to-be passed legislation.

At the initial public hearing on Senator Timberlake's bill there were many approaches suggested to the Legislature's Transportation Committee. The Committee, of which the Senate Chair is former Secretary of State Bill Diamond, quickly assigned the bill for special Task Force study under the leadership of Dave Guilmette, Director of Enforcement and Anti-Theft at Maine's Bureau of Motor Vehicles. Director Guilmette invited about twenty individuals to participate in said Task Force, including Sandy Blalock, Executive Director of Automotive Recyclers Association (ARA), Emil Nusbaum, Government Affairs VP with ARA, Andreas Heiss of LKQ, and Kerby Littlefield and myself of MARA. Most significant was the inclusion of numerous Maine law enforcement officials, who are very adamant about coming up with a new law which

will actually catch or discourage theft, as opposed to simply increasing regulation of law-abiding small business.

The law enforcement representatives were equally adamant about the need for an identifiable marking on every detached converter, in order that such potentially stolen goods could be traced back to a reported theft. Without such identification, law enforcement emphasized, very few presumed thefts could ever result in convictions. The initial proposal before the Task Force required that all detached converters be inscribed with the auto's VIN. MARA and ARA pointed out the workload that this 17-digit requirement would place on auto recyclers. MARA's Kerby Littlefield insisted that licensed auto recyclers have the equally workable alternative of inscribing detached converters with the correct stock number together with the recycler's license number. This alternative was included in the Sec-

retary of State's final recommendation to the Committee.

MARA and ARA have insisted on one other condition for passage of the proposed legislation: that it be accompanied by significantly increased law enforcement, including added BMV staff focused on this singular issue. As Littlefield has pointed out, absent strong and effective law enforcement we are just writing a law requiring time-consuming work by recyclers.

The Legislature's Transportation Committee met again March 8 and approved language provided by the Maine's Secretary of State and Attorney General. Deputy Secretary of State Catherine Curtis emphasized that while it will be illegal to be in possession of an unnumbered catalytic converter, the emphasis must be on deterring and catching thieves.

- Bill Bell, MARA Executive Director

Subsequent newsletters to MARA members will keep you informed regarding final passage of the proposed law and the date that such will take effect.

Obituary Notice: Bruce Crawford

Bruce Crawford, the executive director the Auto and Truck Recyclers of New Hampshire, died peacefully in his sleep this February after a short illness.

Bruce attended and spoke at several of our MARA Annual Meetings and was a staunch advocate on behalf of small business. An experienced truck and heavy equipment mechanic, he was serving his 18th year as ATRA's executive director at the time of his passing. His friendship and advice to your MARA executive director were greatly valued.

SECTIONS OF PROPOSED LAW AFFECTING AUTO RECYCLERS INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:

A recycler that detaches a catalytic converter from a motor vehicle shall ensure that the catalytic converter is marked. Unless the recycler is using a stock number system, the detached converter shall be marked with the full vehicle identification number of the vehicle from which the catalytic converter was removed. A recycler using a stock converter number in place of a full vehicle identification number shall mark the detached catalytic converter with the stock number and the recycler license number. The marking shall be done using engraving or another permanent marking method and shall be done in a manner that the vehicle identification number is clearly visible and legible.

Only a licensed recycler may purchase or acquire a catalytic converter that has been detached from a motor vehicle. A business that deals in the removal of the contents of detached catalytic converters shall be licensed as a recycler.

A recycler transporting detached catalytic converters shall allow the inspection of the catalytic converters in the load upon request of law enforcement.

A recycler transporting catalytic converters that are marked only with the stock number and the recycler license number shall have a manifest. The manifest shall be provided to law enforcement upon request. The manifest shall include the stock numbers, the the vehicle identification numbers, and the name of the recyclers that marked the catalytic converters.

A scrap metal processor purchasing vehicles or vehicle parts from a licensed recycler shall obtain a copy of the seller's recycler license.

Want to stay informed about this proposed new law and other issues affecting auto recyclers in Maine?

Become a MARA Member! Benefits include:

- We work with Maine DEP and BMV on issues that affect auto recyclers.
- We closely follow legislative issues and provide effective representation before Committees.
- Problem specific to your yard? Experienced members can provide advice.
- Members are listed on our website, www.maineautorecyclers.org
- Our Annual Meeting and Banquet, which is free of charge!

To become a member, download a membership application from our website or call us to request one be sent to you.

www.maineautorecyclers.org

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MARA Annual Meeting: May 2022

Your MARA President, Dave Bolduc, and MARA Executive Board regret that Covid-related restaurant policies and staff shortages have prevented holding of our Annual Meeting these past two years.

While it would have been possible to conduct the meeting's official business via Zoom, your Board instead has been waiting for restaurants to resume their banquet services, so that MARA members and their guests could again enjoy the fellowship, good (free!) food, and exchange of information enjoyed at this annual event.

With restaurant business returning to normal, we look forward to soon announcing –via a special mailing--the date and place of this meeting, to be at a facility in Central Maine in May!

In the meantime, we thank Dave Bolduc for his willingness to continue serving – an extra two years—as MARA President.

Maine Auto Recyclers Association Officers

President - David Bolduc
DAB, Inc. Freeport

Vice President - Dustin Brown
Brown's Exit 27 Salvage, Gardiner

Secretary - Paul Pinette
Paul's Pick-A-Part, Chelsea

Treasurer - Darryl Brown
Brown's Exit 27 Salvage, Gardiner

Immediate Past President - Jeff Bazinet
Auto & Truck Recyclers, Windham

Executive Director
Bill Bell