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COMMITTEES:

INTERSTATE AND FOREIGN
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INTERIOR AND INSULAR
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Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, D.C. 20515

CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

March 29, 1982

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Mr. Paul E. Healy
City Clerk
City Hall
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139

Dear Mr. Healy:

Knowing of your interest in consumer issues, I'd like to bring to your attention legislation which deals with the ever-increasing problem of auto theft.

Auto theft has become big business. More than one million vehicles were stolen in 1980--one theft every 28 seconds. This has cost you and me more than \$5 billion in property and court costs. For the people of Massachusetts this is a special problem because our state has the unwelcome distinction of leading the nation in the auto theft rate. More than 60,000 vehicles were stolen in Massachusetts in 1980.

I am pleased to inform you that I have cosponsored a bill introduced by Representative Bill Green (D-NY) in the U.S. House of Representatives. This bill will require U.S. auto manufacturers to put identification numbers on many major component parts of vehicles. Vehicles Identification Numbers (VIN's) would be placed on parts such as doors, hoods, and hatchbacks because these parts are most likely to be damaged in accidents and to be in the greatest demand as replacement parts. The large demand for these parts has created an instant inroad for organized crime to get involved in the illegal parts supply business, which is now so slick that it operates largely on a steal-to-order basis.

The cost of the new-parts labeling will be limited by the law to \$10 per vehicle--less than \$1 per year considering the average life of a car. Most consumers would consider this a small price to pay for the security of knowing that it may dramatically reduce the chances of having your new car or parts of it stolen. Because major parts of a car could be traced to the original owner, thieves would be discouraged from dealing in such visible merchandise. Auto engines and transmissions, the only two parts now marked by manufacturers, are seldom included in the illegal parts racket.

Mr. Paul E. Healy

Page 2

March 29, 1982

The bill, H.R. 4325, would strike at the heart of what has turned into a tremendously profitable operation for organized crime: the "chop shop." Vehicles brought to these shops are dismantled and the parts are sold to often unsuspecting customers, who are willing to pay a premium price for the fast service they receive. A new car retailing for \$7,000 can be worth up to \$25,000 if each of its parts is sold separately.

This legislation is an important first step in combating what has become an all too familiar problem for consumers: returning to the spot where you parked your car to find it stripped of all valuable parts -- or to find that it has disappeared altogether.

I hope you have found this information useful and interesting. Please feel free to contact me at any time on this or any other issue of concern to you.

With best wishes,

Sincerely,


EDWARD J. MARKEY
Member of Congress

EJM/pa

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⑤-345

Comm. from Paul E. Healy, City Clerk, transmitting comm. from Congressman Edward J. Markey Re: legislation to discourage auto theft

In City Council,

April 5, 1982

4/5/82

Placed on File