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Guest Columnist

Erroneous Assumptions

truck dealers, an unintended consequence is fewer options available to our mutual customers as to where they go for vehicle maintenance and repair. The voice of the customer is very clear in the marketplace. They want to be able to choose, not be restricted, in where they go for parts and service.

You stated, "The nominees voiced concerns that the independents simply aren't qualified to make those types of repairs."

Mr. Bassett stated, "OEM dealerships invest tens of thousands of dollars of training in our techni-

cians every year. Simply buying the computer-based training from the OEM isn't going to guarantee the customer gets a good repair experience if you don't have the required training."

If dealers truly cared about customers, they wouldn't restrict their repair options.

Mr. Mytty stated, "We're spending three-quarters of a million a year on training to keep up with this technology and make sure we can fix the customer's truck correctly. I don't think just by having a sign saying 'I fix trucks' means it's justified to expect them to have the knowledge to repair it correctly."

All of these statements were made with an assumption that the independent service provider is not willing to invest in the training and tools necessary to effectively, efficiently and safely fix our customers' trucks. That is simply not true!

We, too, spend tens of thousands of dollars on training our technicians every year. We have to use the same

training material, diagnostic tools and repair software that the OEM dealer uses. In some cases, we have to spend more than the OEM dealer because the training materials are not as readily available to an independent service provider. We don't just buy the repair software and diagnostic tools then skip the training that goes with it. That would be foolish. We do much more than hang out a sign that says, "I fix trucks." We hire and continue to improve and enhance the skills of our professional truck technicians through continuous education.

In the end, the marketplace will determine who is successful and who is unsuccessful. If the OEM dealer provides the most value, the customer will choose the dealer. If the independent service provider has the most value, the customer will choose the independent. Let the customers decide where they want to have their vehicles fixed. Isn't that how free enterprise works? Wouldn't that dynamic create the greatest value for the truck owner? Mr. Bassett stated, "Our concern, frankly, is for our customers." If that is true, then Mr. Bassett would have to support "customer choice."

Dave Scheer is president and CEO of Kansas City-based parts and service provider Inland Truck Parts and Service, chairman of the Heavy Duty Distribution Association, active in Heavy Duty Aftermarket Week and a proponent of "Right to Repair."

In the January/February 2012 issue, Deborah Lockridge's editorial, "Dealer Perspective," reported on interviews with several of this year's nominees for the American Truck Dealers/Heavy Duty Trucking Truck Dealer of the Year: Trey Mytty, president and CEO of Omaha Truck Center, Omaha, Neb.; John Arscott, president and CEO of The Pete Store, Baltimore; and Steve Bassett, president of General Truck Sales, Muncie, Ind.

You asked the nominees about Right to Repair, which is the name for ongoing legislation that would require the OEM truck manufacturer to make available the same repair and diagnostic information to the independent aftermarket that is available to the OEM dealer. I am writing to clarify some misunderstandings and myths that surround this issue concerning the independent parts and service provider.

The issue is this: Vehicle owners' access to maintenance and repair services is being compromised. With the increasing sophistication and computerization of vehicle components and subsystems, access to codes and technical/product data is being restricted at the source: the vehicle manufacturer. Although one of the intended benefits of this practice is to drive more business to OEM