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Editor

YOUR VOICE WAS HEARD

As we were putting together this issue of *Texas Automotive*, word came down that neither of ABAT's current bills would be moving forward in this two-year legislative session. Although it's hard not to think of this development as a disappointment, I'd like to share some thoughts that I hope will provide a positive perspective on things.

As a professional journalist, I learned decades ago that the world doesn't stop spinning when 5pm rolls around. News can happen at any hour, so being ready to stay on top of things regardless of the time comes with the job. For three days, I followed the live stream of the Texas House of Representatives as it discussed and voted on a seemingly endless list of bills. In fact, the second day's session ran about 12 hours. To say this was the most grueling and intense legislative process I've ever witnessed would be an understatement. You don't need me to tell you that these past 15 months have been challenging for everyone, but this reality was brought home as House members debated a slew of highly contentious pieces of legislation. From COVID-19 to education to civil rights, the topics brought to the floor presented snapshots of the critical issues that Texas and every other state in our country is grappling with right now.

Then, toward the end of the third evening, House Bill 2534 – often referred to as “the Appraisal Clause Bill” – was heard. (ABAT's other legislation, House Bill 1131, didn't move beyond the House Committee on Insurance.) Representative Travis Clardy, a longtime supporter of ABAT and the collision repair industry, offered a succinct declaration of the bill's intent:

“House Bill 2534 has to do with the Right of Appraisal. This is a longstanding tradition in the Insurance Code, but this will make it mandatory and allow everybody – both the insurance companies and the consumers – to elect the appraiser to make sure they get fair value with their vehicles.”

And then it passed in a flash. The whole thing took about 20 seconds. Really. Unlike several bills heard that day, there was no point of order, no histrionics, no heated 45-minute-back-and-forth, no controversy – just the quick acknowledgement and acceptance of a reasonable consumer-protection bill that earned a positive vote from the majority of the room. It was refreshing to see the bill move forward so rapidly based on the fact that *it just made sense*. If you sat through even one day of the House proceedings that week, you know that this swift vote alone was a massive victory. Unfortunately, the Senate didn't run with the ball; there were just too many other things going on in this session. That's a reflection of the state of American politics – not an indicator that House Bill 2534 didn't matter. On the contrary, I've never seen a bill earn so much clear interest from a House committee. If you saw the live stream of that Committee hearing, you saw representatives taking the insurance industry to task over its gross under-indemnification of Texas consumers. It was clear that the Committee understands why the Appraisal Clause needs to be in every automotive insurance policy in this state.

Here is something important to keep in mind: House Bill 2534 had its moment to be heard on the House floor, and it received a favorable review from the Committee on Insurance. ABAT has become a known consumer-advocacy force in the Legislature. There's a lot of strength and momentum to come from that. The association's bills are paused for now, but ABAT's standing in the political arena is not in dispute. It will be very interesting to see what will happen once our world truly gets back to normal and many of the issues that are clogging this current session are addressed and off the table.

Please read this month's Ask the Expert by Robert L. McDorman and our cover story for more insight into ABAT's efforts in this session on behalf of Texas consumers.

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**ATTN ABAT
MEMBERS:**



GIVE YOUR CONSUMERS A VOICE!

If you have customers who've had issues with their insurance companies (under-indemnification, total loss disputes, etc.) while their vehicles were at your shop, *Texas Automotive* magazine wants to hear their stories!

Contact *Texas Automotive* Editorial Director Joel Gausten at (603) 680-4324 or joel@grecopublishing.com to discuss having their story featured in our newest series, “The Consumer's Voice”!