

EXPANDING OUR ALLIES



Burl Richards
ABAT President

I just got back from a great meeting that reminded me of just how important it is to share and work together with others in the automotive industry.

ABAT Vice President Eric McKenzie, Board member Robert McDorman and I traveled hours to Austin to meet with representatives from the Texas Automobile Dealers Association (TADA) and the North Texas Automobile Dealers (NTXAD). Our goal in doing so was to gain insight into some of the issues facing dealerships in our state and how these problems may impact us on the collision repair side. It didn't take long for everyone in the meeting (including our lobbyist, Jacob Smith, who took the time to join us) to realize that we shared many of the same concerns. Our

mutual push for OEM-required/recommended repair procedures was a major talking point, which isn't surprising when considering that many dealers also have body shops. Additionally, we learned more about how undervalued total loss vehicles hurt consumers by turning their finances upside down when they attempt to get a loan for another vehicle. Of course, a lot of totaled vehicles are getting sold at auctions without having the proper salvage title. This problem is a huge worry for everyone – consumers, dealers and repairers alike. Everyone at the meeting pledged to work together to develop possible solutions to these dilemmas, and I look forward to seeing where these stronger ties with the dealer side will lead ABAT and the consumers we serve.

Another takeaway from this meeting was just how dedicated ABAT Board members truly are. Robert and Eric spent time and money to be there, and nobody on our Board gets paid or reimbursed for doing stuff like this. With the exception of Jacob and Executive Director Jill Tuggle, everyone involved in leading this association is a volunteer. We're doing this solely to fight for our industry. This is why membership is so important. You're the ones who keep us going. We're nothing without your support, ideas and action.

On another note, you can expect ABAT to also focus on some of the discrepancies out there between what is taught through I-CAR and the actual application of these things out in the field. I-CAR has insurance industry personnel sitting on its Board of Directors; obviously, they know what the instructors are telling students to do. Why do appraisers from these carriers still fight shops tooth and nail over performing procedures that people *from their own companies* endorse and help develop? It doesn't make sense, and ABAT fully intends to push I-CAR for clarity and answers moving forward.

As always, let us know if you're dealing with any struggles at your shop. It's very likely that many other shops are dealing with the same thing. Take advantage of your membership and let us know how we can help.

Burl Richards

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