

Rep. Roscoe Bartlett said, “On June 2, I participated in a news conference in Frederick, Maryland with auto dealers including Jack Fitzgerald. Usually you can identify winners and losers in any proposal. However, in this case there are only losers, but not winners from the decision to close independently owned and operated profitable auto dealerships. I drafted a bill to ensure the rights of the dealers will be protected. Then I discovered Rep. Maffei had drafted an almost identical bill so I signed on as an original cosponsor.

Ronald Reagan said, ‘there's no limit to what can be accomplished if you don't care who gets the credit.’ Swift approval of this bipartisan bill will ensure the Rule of Law prevails to protect the private property rights of auto dealers. The auto dealerships are pillars of our communities. The 17 Chrysler dealerships targeted for closing employ more than 1,100 people. These men and women deserve better than these capricious closings and specious claims that eliminating, intimidating or alienating their best customers will help Chrysler or GM, our economy, consumers or taxpayers.”

Congressman Chris Van Hollen said, “There is no question we need to assist in the restructuring of the American auto industry. But we can't help the car makers if we shut down the profitable auto dealers who sell their cars. Local car dealerships employ hundreds of thousands of Americans, contribute to vibrant local economies all across our country, and are key to putting the American auto industry back on top. With this legislation we are allowing the market to do what it does best – determine which dealerships should remain open and which must close.”

“The bill introduced by Congressmen Maffei and Kratovil defends our nation's auto dealerships from being arbitrarily closed,” said House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer. “So far, there seems to be no evidence that closing profitable dealerships will save the automakers any money, while it would result in thousands of lost jobs at a time our economy can't afford it. Government has no interest in making day-to-day decisions for the automakers, and we are not asking for certain dealerships to remain open. This legislation says that the dealers' contracts should be honored, and any closings should be done in accordance with those contracts and state law.”

“We all recognize that the economy is not favorable to the auto industry right now: we have already seen layoffs from manufacturers and we expect to see many dealerships consolidate and close this year,” said Maffei. “However, forced, arbitrary closure of dealers by manufactures will not necessarily be financially beneficial to automakers, and it certainly will not help the local economies where dealers are integral to the business community. These dealerships employ hundreds of people across my district in good-paying jobs, they sponsor our little league teams and our pancake breakfasts, they have been a cornerstone of our community for generations -- and we are asking that they be allowed to make the best decisions possible for their employees and businesses.”

“Driving up and down Route 50 in Maryland, the landscape is dotted with car dealerships that have locked their doors and emptied their lots,” said Congressman Kratovil. “Each one represents dozens of employees left without income or health care, and a major hit to the local economies of these towns. This bill throws the dealers, their employees, and many communities a lifeline by allowing dealerships to keep their doors

at their discretion and according to contractual obligations. At a time when our nation is reeling from the loss of hundreds of thousands of jobs each month we can't make the problem worse by forcing hundreds more dealerships to shut their doors. Any dealership that is willing and able to fight through this economic gloom deserves a chance to do so. This bill won't give auto dealers a handout or a bailout -- it will give them a fair shot to survive or fail in the marketplace. That's something every small business deserves."