

Rally Protests Steering To Insurers' Preferred Body Shops

Courant Staff Report

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More than 40 tow trucks and other vehicles were driven around the state Capitol Wednesday around lunchtime with horns blaring in support of legislation against steering of customers to auto insurers' preferred body shops.

The event, sponsored by the Auto Body Association of Connecticut, began with a rally at the Connecticut Expo Center and featured comments by Attorney General Richard Blumenthal. After gaining attention at the Capitol, the group continued its protest at insurer Progressive's "concierge" claim center in Newington.

The association is supporting a bill in the General Assembly, like one submitted in 2007, that would prohibit an auto insurer from recommending, requesting or requiring that a consumer use one of the company's "preferred" body shops after an accident. The bill would also require insurers to pay for repairs at "usual and customary" rates — what the general public would pay for similar repairs in the same area of the state.

"We must preserve consumer choice and industry competition, deterring collusive relationships between certain insurers and repairers," Blumenthal said Wednesday.

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