

Assembly Bill No. 192

CHAPTER 585

An act to add Section 17537.7 to the Business and Professions Code, and to amend Section 11713.1 of, and to add Section 11713.11 to, the Vehicle Code, relating to vehicles.

[Approved by Governor October 4, 1995. Filed
with Secretary of State October 4, 1995.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 192, Cannella. Vehicles: dealers: unlawful acts.

(1) Existing law prohibits the holder of any vehicle dealer's license from doing any one or more of various prescribed acts, including, among other acts, advertising that the selling price of a vehicle is above, below, or at, among other things, the manufacturer's or distributor's invoice price to the dealer. It is a misdemeanor to violate those provisions.

This bill would make it unlawful for any person to use the terms "invoice," "dealer invoice," or "wholesale price," or similar terms that refer to a dealer's cost for a motor vehicle in an advertisement for the sale or lease of a vehicle, or advertise that the selling price of a vehicle is above, below, or at either selling prices or cost, with specified exceptions. The bill would make conforming changes in an existing provision (Sec. 11713.1, Veh. C.) governing dealer advertising, and would incorporate changes in that provision made by AB 1170 (Ch. 211, Stats. 1995). Because a violation of these provisions would be a crime, the bill would impose a state-mandated local program.

This bill would also prohibit a dealer, when advertising one or more specific auction events, from advertising that a vehicle will be auctioned to the public unless specified information pertaining to the vehicle and the auction is disclosed in the advertisement, would prohibit the advertisement of vehicles seized by public agencies or authorities unless specific additional information is disclosed in the advertisement, and would provide that it is unlawful for an auctioning dealer to fail to provide specified information on the day of the auction regarding a vehicle seized by a public agency or authority. Because a violation of these prohibitions would be misdemeanors, the bill would create new crimes and would thus impose a state-mandated local program.

(2) The California Constitution requires the state to reimburse local agencies and school districts for certain costs mandated by the state. Statutory provisions establish procedures for making that reimbursement.

This bill would provide that no reimbursement is required by this act for a specified reason.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. Section 17537.7 is added to the Business and Professions Code, to read:

17537.7. Except as to communications described in paragraph (2) of subdivision (n) of Section 11713.1 of the Vehicle Code, it is unlawful for any person to use the terms “invoice,” “dealer invoice,” “wholesale price,” or similar terms that refer to a dealer’s cost for a motor vehicle in an advertisement for the sale or lease of a vehicle, or advertise that the selling price of a vehicle is above, below, or at either of the following:

(a) The manufacturer’s or distributor’s invoice or selling price to a dealer.

(b) A dealer’s cost.

SEC. 2. Section 11713.1 of the Vehicle Code is amended to read:

11713.1. It is a violation of this code for the holder of any dealer’s license issued under this article to do any of the following:

(a) Advertise any specific vehicle for sale without identifying the vehicle by either its vehicle identification number or license number.

(b) Advertise the total price of a vehicle without including all costs to the purchaser at time of sale, except taxes, vehicle registration fees, certificate of compliance or noncompliance fees not exceeding thirty-five dollars (\$35) pursuant to any statute, finance charges, and any dealer document preparation charge. The dealer document preparation charge shall not exceed thirty-five dollars (\$35).

(c) Exclude from the newspaper display advertisement of a vehicle for sale that there will be added to the advertised total price at the time of sale, charges for sales tax, vehicle registration fees, the fee charged by the state for the issuance of any certificate of compliance or noncompliance pursuant to any statute, finance charges, and any dealer document preparation charge.

For purposes of this subdivision, “newspaper display advertisement” means any advertisement in a newspaper which is two or more newspaper columns in width or one newspaper column in width and more than seven inches in length.

(d) Represent the dealer document preparation charge or certificate of compliance or noncompliance fee, as a governmental fee.

(e) Fail to sell a vehicle to any person at the advertised total price, exclusive of taxes, vehicle registration fees, the fee charged by the state for the issuance of any certificate of compliance or noncompliance pursuant to any statute, finance charges, mobilehome escrow fees, the amount of any city, county, or city and county imposed fee or tax for a mobilehome, and any dealer



document preparation charge, which charges shall not exceed thirty-five dollars (\$35) for the document preparation charge and thirty-five dollars (\$35) for the certificate of compliance or noncompliance pursuant to any statute, while the vehicle remains unsold, unless the advertisement states the advertised total price is good only for a specified time and the time has elapsed.

(f) (1) Advertise for sale, sell, or purchase for resale any new vehicle of a line-make for which the dealer does not hold a franchise.

(2) This subdivision does not apply to any transaction involving any of the following:

(A) A mobilehome.

(B) A recreational vehicle as defined in Section 18010 of the Health and Safety Code.

(C) A commercial coach, as defined in Section 18001.8 of the Health and Safety Code.

(D) An off-highway motor vehicle subject to identification as defined in Section 38012.

(E) A manufactured home.

(F) A new vehicle that will be substantially altered or modified by a converter prior to resale.

(G) A commercial vehicle with a gross vehicle weight rating or more than 10,000 pounds.

(H) A vehicle purchased for export and exported outside the territorial limits of the United States without being registered with the department.

(g) Sell a park trailer, as specified in subdivision (b) of Section 18010 of the Health and Safety Code, without disclosing in writing to the purchaser that a park trailer is required to be moved by a transporter or a licensed manufacturer or dealer under a permit issued by the Department of Transportation or a local authority with respect to highways under their respective jurisdictions.

(h) Advertise free merchandise, gifts, or services provided by a dealer contingent on the purchase of a vehicle. The term “free” includes merchandise or services offered for sale at a price less than the seller’s cost of the merchandise or services.

(i) Advertise vehicles, and related goods or services, at a specified dealer price, with the intent not to supply reasonably expectable demand, unless the advertisement discloses the number of vehicles in stock at the advertised price. In addition, whether or not there are sufficient vehicles in stock to supply a reasonably expectable demand, when phrases such as “starting at,” “from,” “beginning as low as,” or words of similar import are used in reference to an advertised price, the advertisement shall disclose the number of vehicles available at that advertised price.

For purposes of this subdivision, in any newspaper advertisement for a vehicle that is two model years old or newer, the actual phrase that states the number of vehicles in stock at the advertised price shall



be (1) printed in a type size that is at least equal to one-quarter of the type size, and in the same style and color of type, used for the advertised price, however, in no case shall the phrase be printed in less than 8-point type size, and (2) be disclosed immediately above, below, or beside the advertised price without any intervening words, pictures, marks, or symbols.

The disclosure required by this subdivision is in addition to any other disclosure required by this code or any regulation regarding identifying vehicles advertised for sale.

(j) Use the term “rebate” or similar words such as “cash back” in advertising the sale of a vehicle unless the rebate is expressed in a specific dollar amount and is in fact a rebate offered by the vehicle manufacturer or distributor directly to the retail purchaser of the vehicle or to the assignee of the retail purchaser.

(k) Require a person to pay a higher price for a vehicle and related goods or services for receiving advertised credit terms than the cash price the same person would have to pay to purchase the same vehicle and related goods or services. For the purpose of this subdivision, “cash price” has the meaning as defined in subdivision (e) of Section 2981 of the Civil Code.

(l) Advertise a guaranteed trade-in allowance unless the guarantee is provided by the manufacturer or distributor.

(m) Misrepresent the authority of a salesperson, representative, or agent to negotiate the final terms of a transaction.

(n) (1) Use the terms “invoice,” “dealer’s invoice,” “wholesale price,” or similar terms that refer to a dealer’s cost for a vehicle in an advertisement for the sale of a vehicle or advertise that the selling price of a vehicle is above, below, or at either of the following:

(A) The manufacturer’s or distributor’s invoice price to a dealer.

(B) A dealer’s cost.

(2) This subdivision does not apply to either of the following:

(A) Any communication occurring during face-to-face negotiations for the purchase of a specific vehicle if the prospective purchaser initiates a discussion of the vehicle’s invoice price or the dealer’s cost for that vehicle.

(B) Any communication between a dealer and a prospective commercial purchaser that is not disseminated to the general public. For purposes of this subparagraph, a “commercial purchaser” means a dealer, lessor, lessor-retailer, manufacturer, remanufacturer, distributor, financial institution, governmental entity, or person who purchases 10 or more vehicles during a year.

(o) Violate any law prohibiting bait and switch advertising, including, but not limited to, the guides against bait advertising set forth in Part 238 (commencing with Section 238) of Title 16 of the Code of Federal Regulations, as those regulations read on January 1, 1988.



(p) Make any untrue or misleading statement indicating that a vehicle is equipped with all the factory installed optional equipment the manufacturer offers, including, but not limited to, a false statement that a vehicle is “fully factory equipped.”

(q) Affix on any new vehicle a supplemental price sticker containing a price that represents the dealer’s asking price which exceeds the manufacturer’s suggested retail price unless all of the following occur:

(1) The supplemental sticker clearly and conspicuously discloses in the largest print appearing on the sticker, other than the print size used for the dealer’s name, that the supplemental sticker price is the dealer’s asking price, or words of similar import, and that it is not the manufacturer’s suggested retail price.

(2) The supplemental sticker clearly and conspicuously discloses the manufacturer’s suggested retail price.

(3) The supplemental sticker lists each item which is not included in the manufacturer’s suggested retail price, and discloses the additional price of each item. If the supplemental sticker price is greater than the sum of the manufacturer’s suggested retail price and the price of the items added by the dealer, then the supplemental sticker price shall set forth that difference and describe it as “added mark-up.”

(r) Advertise any underselling claim, such as “we have the lowest prices” or “we will beat any dealer’s price,” unless the dealer has conducted a recent survey showing that the dealer sells its vehicles at lower prices than any other licensee in its trade area and maintains records to adequately substantiate the claims. The substantiating records shall be made available to the department upon request.

(s) Advertise any incentive offered by the manufacturer or distributor if the dealer is required to contribute to the cost of the incentive as a condition of participating in the incentive program, unless the dealer discloses in a clear and conspicuous manner that dealer participation may affect consumer cost.

For purposes of this subdivision, “incentive” means anything of value offered to induce people to purchase a vehicle, including, but not limited to, discounts, savings claims, rebates, below-market finance rates, and free merchandise or services.

(t) Display or offer for sale any used vehicle unless there is affixed to the vehicle the Federal Trade Commission’s Buyer’s Guide as required by Part 455 of Title 16 of the Code of Federal Regulations.

(u) Fail to disclose in writing to the franchisor of a new motor vehicle dealer the name of the purchaser, date of sale, and the vehicle identification number of each new motor vehicle sold of the line-make of that franchisor, or intentionally submit to that franchisor a false name for the purchaser or false date for the date of sale.

(v) Enter into a contract for the retail sale of a motor vehicle unless the contract clearly and conspicuously discloses whether the



vehicle is being sold as a new vehicle or a used vehicle, as defined in this code.

(w) Use a simulated check, as defined in subdivision (a) of Section 22433 of the Business and Professions Code, in an advertisement for the sale or lease of a vehicle.

(x) Fail to disclose, in a clear and conspicuous manner in at least 10-point bold type on the face of any contract for the retail sale of a new motor vehicle that this transaction is, or is not, subject to a fee received by an autobroker from the selling new motor vehicle dealer, and the name of the autobroker, if applicable.

SEC. 3. Section 11713.11 is added to the Vehicle Code, to read:

11713.11. (a) When advertising one or more specific auction events to the public, it is unlawful for a dealer licensed under this article to advertise that a vehicle will be auctioned to the public unless all of the following information is clearly and conspicuously disclosed in the advertisement:

(1) The date or the day of the week of the public auction, or if subdivision (b) applies to the auction, the date of the public auction.

(2) The location of the public auction.

(3) Whether a fee will be charged to attend the auction.

(4) The name and dealer number of the auctioning dealer.

(b) If vehicles seized by a federal, state, or local public agency or authority are being advertised, it is unlawful for a dealer licensed under this article to advertise that a vehicle will be auctioned to the public unless, in addition to the information required by subdivision (a), the following information is clearly and conspicuously disclosed in the advertisement:

(1) A good faith estimate of the number of vehicles to be auctioned at that date.

(2) A good faith estimate of the number of vehicles seized by a federal, state, or local public agency or authority to be auctioned at that date.

(c) It is unlawful for the auctioning dealer to fail, on the day of auction, to identify each vehicle seized by a federal, state, or local public agency or authority, either in a printed catalog or orally, before bidding begins on the vehicle.

SEC. 4. No reimbursement is required by this act pursuant to Section 6 of Article XIII B of the California Constitution because the only costs that may be incurred by a local agency or school district will be incurred because this act creates a new crime or infraction, eliminates a crime or infraction, or changes the penalty for a crime or infraction, within the meaning of Section 17556 of the Government Code, or changes the definition of a crime within the meaning of Section 6 of Article XIII B of the California Constitution.

Notwithstanding Section 17580 of the Government Code, unless otherwise specified, the provisions of this act shall become operative



on the same date that the act takes effect pursuant to the California Constitution.

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