



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Betty Little

Little: Check for safety recalls when vehicles are inspected

BETTY LITTLE May 5, 2015

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The State Senate Transportation Committee today approved legislation (S.4296) sponsored by Senator Betty Little that would require registered owners be notified of any manufacturer recall notices when their motor vehicles are inspected.

If the official inspection station found that the motor vehicle is the subject of a safety recall, it would notify the owner in writing on the Vehicle Inspection Report that the automobile may be repaired at an authorized manufacturer dealer at no charge to the vehicle owner.

Little said a federal database makes the information available free online, but requiring a check during an inspection would better ensure vehicle owners have the potentially lifesaving information.

“The annual vehicle inspection is an ideal time to run a simple computer check to see if there are any recall notices,” said Little. “The database of vehicle recalls already exists. In fact, checking it is something any vehicle owner can do on their own already.

“This is simply a matter of making the nexus between our inspection garages, the Department of Motor Vehicles and the federal database and providing that information to the consumer.”

A constituent of Little’s, Michael Sharkey, died in 2012 as a result of a car accident. The car he had purchased nine days prior struck a rock wall and burst into flames. Blood tests found no evidence of drugs or alcohol and a State Police investigation concluded the cause of the crash could not be determined.

Two weeks after the accident, his mother, Cherie Sharkey, received a recall notice in the mail informing them of a problem with the car’s power steering. A few months later, a second notice was received indicating a potential problem with the car’s fuel pump and a third notice, not received by the Sharkeys, was issued for an ignition switch issue with the vehicle.

Little said the number of auto recalls has increased greatly over the past several years. According to figures released by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, automakers issued a record number of more than 800 recalls for more than 64 million vehicles in 2014.

Automakers are required to issue notices of a safety recall to the original owner, but it is more difficult to notify owners who have purchased a pre-owned vehicle through a third-party, known as a causal sale.

“An example that comes to mind is the young kid buying his first car from a neighbor. It looks nice, handles great, price is right.

With the title in hand he drives off not knowing, or even considering, the car may have a recall that needs to be addressed. If this measure becomes law, he would be notified immediately when he has that car inspected.”

Little added that some car owners ignore the recall notices they receive. The annual inspection would serve as an opportunity to remind them of a recall needing attention.

The legislation further requires that the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) will promote and provide notice to consumers of the availability of information on motor vehicle safety recalls. This includes providing a link on the DMV website to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's searchable database of safety recalls at www.safercar.gov.

By entering their vehicle's VIN number into www.safercar.gov, a consumer can quickly determine if there is a safety recall on their vehicle. The Department of Motor Vehicles is also required to provide this information to consumers through an insert included with a motor vehicle owner's registration or renewal.

“The goal of this legislation is simply to strengthen consumer protection and enhance motor vehicle safety in New York,” said Little.