

LEGISLATIVE BILL 896

Approved by the Governor April 10, 2012

Introduced by Fischer, 43; Hadley, 37.

FOR AN ACT relating to the Motor Vehicle Industry Regulation Act; to amend section 60-1437, Revised Statutes Supplement, 2011; to prohibit certain actions and provide procedures for incentive compensation; to repeal the original section; and to declare an emergency.

Be it enacted by the people of the State of Nebraska,

Section 1. Section 60-1437, Revised Statutes Supplement, 2011, is amended to read:

60-1437 In addition to the restrictions imposed by section 60-1436, a manufacturer or distributor shall not:

(1) Fail to deliver new motor vehicles or new motor vehicle parts or accessories within a reasonable time and in reasonable quantities relative to the new motor vehicle dealer's market area and facilities, unless the failure is caused by acts or occurrences beyond the control of the manufacturer or distributor or unless the failure results from an order by the new motor vehicle dealer in excess of quantities reasonably and fairly allocated by the manufacturer or distributor;

(2) Refuse to disclose to a new motor vehicle dealer the method and manner of distribution of new motor vehicles by the manufacturer or distributor or, if a line-make is allocated among new motor vehicle dealers, refuse to disclose to any new motor vehicle dealer that handles the same line-make the system of allocation, including, but not limited to, a complete breakdown by model, and a concise listing of dealerships with an explanation of the derivation of the allocation system, including its mathematical formula in a clear and comprehensible form;

(3) Refuse to disclose to a new motor vehicle dealer the total number of new motor vehicles of a given model which the manufacturer or distributor has sold during the current model year within the dealer's marketing district, zone, or region, whichever geographical area is the smallest;

(4) Increase the price of any new motor vehicle which the new motor vehicle dealer had ordered and delivered to the same retail consumer for whom the vehicle was ordered, if the order was made prior to the dealer's receipt of the written official price increase notification. A sales contract signed by a private retail consumer and binding on the dealer shall constitute evidence of such order. In the event of manufacturer or distributor price reduction or cash rebate, the amount of any reduction or rebate received by a dealer shall be passed on to the private retail consumer by the dealer. Any price reduction in excess of five dollars shall apply to all vehicles in the dealer's inventory which were subject to the price reduction. A price difference applicable to a new model or series of motor vehicles at the time of the introduction of the new model or series shall not be considered a price increase or price decrease. This subdivision shall not apply to price changes caused by the following:

(a) The addition to a motor vehicle of required or optional equipment pursuant to state or federal law;

(b) In the case of foreign-made vehicles or components, revaluation of the United States dollar; or

(c) Any increase in transportation charges due to an increase in rates charged by a common carrier or other transporter;

(5) Fail or refuse to sell or offer to sell to all franchised new motor vehicle dealers in a line-make every new motor vehicle sold or offered for sale to any franchised new motor vehicle dealer of the same line-make. However, the failure to deliver any such new motor vehicle shall not be considered a violation of this section if the failure is due to a lack of manufacturing capacity or to a strike or labor difficulty, a shortage of materials, a freight embargo, or any other cause over which the franchisor has no control. A manufacturer or distributor shall not require that any of its new motor vehicle dealers located in this state pay any extra fee, purchase unreasonable or unnecessary quantities of advertising displays or other materials, or remodel, renovate, or recondition the new motor vehicle dealer's existing facilities in order to receive any particular model or series of vehicles manufactured or distributed by the manufacturer for which the dealers have a valid franchise. Notwithstanding the provisions of this subdivision, nothing contained in this section shall be deemed to prohibit or prevent a manufacturer from requiring that its franchised dealers

located in this state purchase special tools or equipment, stock reasonable quantities of certain parts, or participate in training programs which are reasonably necessary for those dealers to sell or service any model or series of new motor vehicles. This subdivision shall not apply to manufacturers of recreational vehicles;

(6) Fail to offer dealers of a specific line-make a new franchise agreement containing substantially similar terms and conditions for sales of the line-make if the ownership of the manufacturer or distributor changes or there is a change in the plan or system of distribution;

(7) Take an adverse action against a dealer because the dealer sells or leases a motor vehicle that is later exported to a location outside the United States. A franchise provision that allows a manufacturer or distributor to take adverse action against a dealer because the dealer sells or leases a motor vehicle that is later exported to a location outside the United States is enforceable only if, at the time of the original sale or lease, the dealer knew or reasonably should have known that the motor vehicle would be exported to a location outside the United States. A dealer is presumed to have no knowledge that a motor vehicle the dealer sells or leases will be exported to a location outside the United States if, under the laws of a state of the United States (a) the motor vehicle is titled, (b) the motor vehicle is registered, and (c) applicable state and local taxes are paid for the motor vehicle. Such presumption may be rebutted by direct, clear, and convincing evidence that the dealer knew or reasonably should have known at the time of the original sale or lease that the motor vehicle would be exported to a location outside the United States. Except as otherwise permitted by subdivision (7) of this section, a franchise provision that allows a manufacturer or distributor to take adverse action against a dealer because the dealer sells or leases a motor vehicle that is later exported to a location outside the United States is void and unenforceable;

(8) Discriminate against a dealer holding a franchise for a line-make of the manufacturer or distributor in favor of other dealers of the same line-make in this state by:

(a) Selling or offering to sell a new motor vehicle to a dealer at a lower actual price, including the price for vehicle transportation, than the actual price at which the same model similarly equipped is offered to or is available to another dealer in this state during a similar time period; or

(b) Using a promotional program or device or an incentive, payment, or other benefit, whether paid at the time of the sale of the new motor vehicle to the dealer or later, that results in the sale or offer to sell a new motor vehicle to a dealer at a lower price, including the price for vehicle transportation, than the price at which the same model similarly equipped is offered or is available to another dealer in this state during a similar time period. This subdivision shall not prohibit a promotional or incentive program that is functionally available to competing dealers of the same line-make in this state on substantially comparable terms;

(9) Refuse to pay a new motor vehicle dealer for sales incentives, service incentives, rebates, or other forms of incentive compensation within thirty days after their approval by the manufacturer or distributor. The manufacturer or distributor shall either approve or disapprove each claim by the dealer within thirty days after receipt of the claim in a proper form generally used by the manufacturer or distributor. Any claims not specifically disapproved in writing within thirty days after receipt shall be considered to be approved;

(10) Perform an audit to confirm payment of a sales incentive, service incentive, rebate, or other form of incentive compensation more than twelve months after the date of payment of the claim or twelve months after the end of the incentive program by the new motor vehicle dealer unless the claim is fraudulent;

(11) Reduce the amount to be paid to a new motor vehicle dealer for a sales incentive, service incentive, rebate, or other form of incentive compensation or charge back a new motor vehicle dealer subsequent to the payment of the claim for a sales incentive, service incentive, rebate, or other form of incentive compensation unless the manufacturer or distributor shows that the claim lacks required documentation or is alleged to be false, fraudulent, or based on a misrepresentation.

A manufacturer or distributor may not deny a claim based solely on a new motor vehicle dealer's incidental failure to comply with a specific claim processing requirement, such as a clerical error, that does not put into question the legitimacy of the claim. No reduction in the amount to be paid to the new motor vehicle dealer and no charge back subsequent to the payment of a claim may be made until the new motor vehicle dealer has had notice and an opportunity to correct any deficiency and resubmit the claim

and to participate in all franchisor internal appeal processes as well as all available legal processes. If a charge back is the subject of adjudication, internal appeal, mediation, or arbitration, no charge back shall be made until, in the case of an adjudication or legal action, a final order has been issued.

A claim for reimbursement by the manufacturer or distributor of sums due following an audit must be presented to the dealer within ninety days after completion of the audit of the item subject to the claim. A manufacturer or distributor may not setoff or otherwise take control over funds owned or under the control of the new motor vehicle dealer or which are in an account designated for the new motor vehicle dealer when such action is based upon the findings of an audit or other claim with respect thereto until a final decision is issued with respect to any challenge or appeal by either party of any such audit or claim.

Any ambiguity or inconsistency in submission guidelines shall be construed against the manufacturer or distributor;

~~(9)~~ (12) Make any express or implied statement or representation directly or indirectly that the dealer is under any obligation whatsoever to offer to sell or sell any extended service contract, extended maintenance plan, gap policy, gap waiver, or other aftermarket product or service offered, sold, backed by, or sponsored by the manufacturer or distributor or to sell, assign, or transfer any of the dealer's retail sales contracts or leases in this state on motor vehicles manufactured or sold by the manufacturer or distributor to a finance company or class of finance companies, leasing company or class of leasing companies, or other specified person, because of any relationship or affiliation between the manufacturer or distributor and the finance company or companies, leasing company or leasing companies, or the specified person or persons; or

~~(10)~~ (13) Prohibit a franchisee from acquiring a line-make of new motor vehicles solely because the franchisee owns or operates a franchise of the same line-make in a contiguous market.

Any such statements, threats, promises, acts, contracts, or offers of contracts, when their effect may be to lessen or eliminate competition or tend to create a monopoly, are declared unfair trade practices and unfair methods of competition and are prohibited.

Sec. 2. Original section 60-1437, Revised Statutes Supplement, 2011, is repealed.

Sec. 3. Since an emergency exists, this act takes effect when passed and approved according to law.