

RCW 46.70.180 Unlawful acts and practices. Each of the following acts or practices is unlawful:

(1) To cause or permit to be advertised, printed, displayed, published, distributed, broadcasted, televised, or disseminated in any manner whatsoever, any statement or representation with regard to the sale, lease, or financing of a vehicle which is false, deceptive, or misleading, including but not limited to the following:

(a) That no down payment is required in connection with the sale of a vehicle when a down payment is in fact required, or that a vehicle may be purchased for a smaller down payment than is actually required;

(b) That a certain percentage of the sale price of a vehicle may be financed when such financing is not offered in a single document evidencing the entire security transaction;

(c) That a certain percentage is the amount of the service charge to be charged for financing, without stating whether this percentage charge is a monthly amount or an amount to be charged per year;

(d) That a new vehicle will be sold for a certain amount above or below cost without computing cost as the exact amount of the factory invoice on the specific vehicle to be sold;

(e) That a vehicle will be sold upon a monthly payment of a certain amount, without including in the statement the number of payments of that same amount which are required to liquidate the unpaid purchase price.

(2) (a) (i) To incorporate within the terms of any purchase and sale or lease agreement any statement or representation with regard to the sale, lease, or financing of a vehicle which is false, deceptive, or misleading, including but not limited to terms that include as an added cost to the selling price or capitalized cost of a vehicle an amount for licensing or transfer of title of that vehicle which is not actually due to the state, unless such amount has in fact been paid by the dealer prior to such sale.

(ii) However, an amount not to exceed \$200 per vehicle sale or lease may be charged by a dealer to recover administrative costs for collecting motor vehicle excise taxes, licensing and registration fees and other agency fees, verifying and clearing titles, transferring titles, perfecting, releasing, or satisfying liens or other security interests, and other administrative and documentary services rendered by a dealer in connection with the sale or lease of a vehicle and in carrying out the requirements of this chapter or any other provisions of state law.

(b) A dealer may charge the documentary service fee in (a) of this subsection under the following conditions:

(i) The documentary service fee is disclosed in writing to a prospective purchaser or lessee before the execution of a purchase and sale or lease agreement;

(ii) The dealer discloses to the purchaser or lessee in writing that the documentary service fee is a negotiable fee. The disclosure must be written in a typeface that is at least as large as the typeface used in the standard text of the document that contains the disclosure and that is bold faced, capitalized, underlined, or otherwise set out from the surrounding material so as to be conspicuous. The dealer shall not represent to the purchaser or lessee that the fee or charge is required by the state to be paid by either the dealer or prospective purchaser or lessee;

(iii) The documentary service fee is separately designated from the selling price or capitalized cost of the vehicle and from any other taxes, fees, or charges; and

(iv) Dealers disclose in any advertisement that a documentary service fee in an amount up to \$200 may be added to the sale price or the capitalized cost.

For the purposes of this subsection (2), the term "documentary service fee" means the optional amount charged by a dealer to provide the services specified in (a) of this subsection.

(3) To set up, promote, or aid in the promotion of a plan by which vehicles are to be sold or leased to a person for a consideration and upon further consideration that the purchaser or lessee agrees to secure one or more persons to participate in the plan by respectively making a similar purchase and in turn agreeing to secure one or more persons likewise to join in said plan, each purchaser or lessee being given the right to secure money, credits, goods, or something of value, depending upon the number of persons joining the plan.

(4) To commit, allow, or ratify any act of "bushing" which is defined as follows: Entering into a written contract, written purchase order or agreement, retail installment sales agreement, note and security agreement, or written lease agreement, hereinafter collectively referred to as contract or lease, signed by the prospective buyer or lessee of a vehicle, which:

(a) Is subject to any conditions or the dealer's or his or her authorized representative's future acceptance, and the dealer fails or refuses within the "bushing" period, which is four calendar days, exclusive of Saturday, Sunday, or legal holiday, and prior to any further negotiations with said buyer or lessee to inform the buyer or lessee either: (i) That the dealer unconditionally accepts the contract or lease, having satisfied, removed, or waived all conditions to acceptance or performance, including, but not limited to, financing, assignment, or lease approval; or (ii) that the dealer rejects the contract or lease, thereby automatically voiding the contract or lease, as long as such voiding does not negate commercially reasonable contract or lease provisions pertaining to the return of the subject vehicle and any physical damage, excessive mileage after the demand for return of the vehicle, and attorneys' fees authorized by law, and tenders the refund of any initial payment or security made or given by the buyer or lessee, including, but not limited to, any down payment, and tenders return of the trade-in vehicle, key, other trade-in, or certificate of title to a trade-in. Tender may be conditioned on return of the subject vehicle if previously delivered to the buyer or lessee.

The provisions of this subsection (4)(a) do not impair, prejudice, or abrogate the rights of a dealer to assert a claim against the buyer or lessee for misrepresentation or breach of contract and to exercise all remedies available at law or in equity, including those under chapter 62A.9A RCW, if the dealer, bank, or other lender or leasing company discovers that approval of the contract or financing or approval of the lease was based upon material misrepresentations made by the buyer or lessee, including, but not limited to, misrepresentations regarding income, employment, or debt of the buyer or lessee, as long as the dealer, or his or her staff, has not, with knowledge of the material misrepresentation, aided, assisted, encouraged, or participated, directly or indirectly, in the misrepresentation. A dealer shall not be in violation of this

subsection (4)(a) if the buyer or lessee made a material misrepresentation to the dealer, as long as the dealer, or his or her staff, has not, with knowledge of the material misrepresentation, aided, assisted, encouraged, or participated, directly or indirectly, in the misrepresentation.

A dealer may inform a buyer or lessee under this subsection (4)(a) regarding the unconditional acceptance or rejection of the contract, lease, or financing by sending an email message to the buyer's or lessee's supplied email address, by phone call, by leaving a voice message or sending a text message to a phone number provided by the buyer or lessee, by in-person oral communication, by mailing a letter by first-class mail if the buyer or lessee expresses a preference for a letter or declines to provide an email address and a phone number capable of receiving a free text message, or by another means agreed to by the buyer or lessee or approved by the department, effective upon the execution, mailing, or sending of the communication and before expiration of the "bushing" period;

(b) Permits the dealer to renegotiate a dollar amount specified as trade-in allowance on a vehicle delivered or to be delivered by the buyer or lessee as part of the purchase price or lease, for any reason except:

(i) Failure to disclose that the vehicle's certificate of title has been branded for any reason, including, but not limited to, status as a rebuilt vehicle as provided in RCW 46.12.540 and 46.12.560; or

(ii) Substantial physical damage or latent mechanical defect occurring before the dealer took possession of the vehicle and which could not have been reasonably discoverable at the time of the taking of the order, offer, or contract; or

(iii) Excessive additional miles or a discrepancy in the mileage. "Excessive additional miles" means the addition of 500 miles or more, as reflected on the vehicle's odometer, between the time the vehicle was first valued by the dealer for purposes of determining its trade-in value and the time of actual delivery of the vehicle to the dealer. "A discrepancy in the mileage" means (A) a discrepancy between the mileage reflected on the vehicle's odometer and the stated mileage on the signed odometer statement; or (B) a discrepancy between the mileage stated on the signed odometer statement and the actual mileage on the vehicle; or

(c) Fails to comply with the obligation of any written warranty or guarantee given by the dealer requiring the furnishing of services or repairs within a reasonable time.

(5) To commit any offense relating to odometers, as such offenses are defined in RCW 46.37.540, 46.37.550, 46.37.560, and 46.37.570. A violation of this subsection is a class C felony punishable under chapter 9A.20 RCW.

(6) For any vehicle dealer or vehicle salesperson to refuse to furnish, upon request of a prospective purchaser or lessee, for vehicles previously registered to a business or governmental entity, the name and address of the business or governmental entity.

(7) To commit any other offense under RCW 46.37.423, 46.37.424, or 46.37.425.

(8) To commit any offense relating to a dealer's temporary license permit, including but not limited to failure to properly complete each such permit, or the issuance of more than one such permit on any one vehicle. However, a dealer may issue a second temporary permit on a vehicle if the following conditions are met:

(a) The lienholder fails to deliver the vehicle title to the dealer within the required time period;

(b) The dealer has satisfied the lien; and

(c) The dealer has proof that payment of the lien was made within two calendar days, exclusive of Saturday, Sunday, or a legal holiday, after the sales contract has been executed by all parties and all conditions and contingencies in the sales contract have been met or otherwise satisfied.

(9) For a dealer, salesperson, or mobile home manufacturer, having taken an instrument or cash "on deposit" from a purchaser or lessee prior to the delivery of the bargained-for vehicle, to commingle the "on deposit" funds with assets of the dealer, salesperson, or mobile home manufacturer instead of holding the "on deposit" funds as trustee in a separate trust account until the purchaser or lessee has taken delivery of the bargained-for vehicle. Delivery of a manufactured home shall be deemed to occur in accordance with RCW 46.70.135(5). Failure, immediately upon receipt, to endorse "on deposit" instruments to such a trust account, or to set aside "on deposit" cash for deposit in such trust account, and failure to deposit such instruments or cash in such trust account by the close of banking hours on the day following receipt thereof, shall be evidence of intent to commit this unlawful practice: PROVIDED, HOWEVER, That a motor vehicle dealer may keep a separate trust account which equals his or her customary total customer deposits for vehicles for future delivery. For purposes of this section, "on deposit" funds received from a purchaser of a manufactured home means those funds that a seller requires a purchaser to advance before ordering the manufactured home, but does not include any loan proceeds or moneys that might have been paid on an installment contract.

(10) For a dealer or manufacturer to fail to comply with the obligations of any written warranty or guarantee given by the dealer or manufacturer requiring the furnishing of goods and services or repairs within a reasonable period of time, or to fail to furnish to a purchaser or lessee, all parts which attach to the manufactured unit including but not limited to the undercarriage, and all items specified in the terms of a sales or lease agreement signed by the seller and buyer or lessee.

(11) For a vehicle dealer to pay to or receive from any person, firm, partnership, association, or corporation acting, either directly or through a subsidiary, as a buyer's agent for consumers, any compensation, fee, purchase moneys or funds that have been deposited into or withdrawn out of any account controlled or used by any buyer's agent, gratuity, or reward in connection with the purchase, sale, or lease of a new motor vehicle.

(12) For a buyer's agent, acting directly or through a subsidiary, to pay to or to receive from any motor vehicle dealer any compensation, fee, gratuity, or reward in connection with the purchase, sale, or lease of a new motor vehicle. In addition, it is unlawful for any buyer's agent to engage in any of the following acts on behalf of or in the name of the consumer:

(a) Receiving or paying any purchase moneys or funds into or out of any account controlled or used by any buyer's agent;

(b) Signing any vehicle purchase orders, sales contracts, leases, odometer statements, or title documents, or having the name of the buyer's agent appear on the vehicle purchase order, sales contract, lease, or title; or

(c) Signing any other documentation relating to the purchase, sale, lease, or transfer of any new motor vehicle.

It is unlawful for a buyer's agent to use a power of attorney obtained from the consumer to accomplish or effect the purchase, sale, lease, or transfer of ownership documents of any new motor vehicle by any means which would otherwise be prohibited under (a) through (c) of this subsection. However, the buyer's agent may use a power of attorney for physical delivery of motor vehicle license plates to the consumer.

Further, it is unlawful for a buyer's agent to engage in any false, deceptive, or misleading advertising, disseminated in any manner whatsoever, including but not limited to making any claim or statement that the buyer's agent offers, obtains, or guarantees the lowest price on any motor vehicle or words to similar effect.

(13) For a buyer's agent to arrange for or to negotiate the purchase, or both, of a new motor vehicle through an out-of-state dealer without disclosing in writing to the customer that the new vehicle would not be subject to chapter 19.118 RCW. This subsection also applies to leased vehicles. In addition, it is unlawful for any buyer's agent to fail to have a written agreement with the customer that: (a) Sets forth the terms of the parties' agreement; (b) discloses to the customer the total amount of any fees or other compensation being paid by the customer to the buyer's agent for the agent's services; and (c) further discloses whether the fee or any portion of the fee is refundable.

(14) Being a manufacturer, other than a motorcycle manufacturer governed by chapter 46.93 RCW, to:

(a) Coerce or attempt to coerce any vehicle dealer to order or accept delivery of any vehicle or vehicles, parts or accessories, or any other commodities which have not been voluntarily ordered by the vehicle dealer: PROVIDED, That recommendation, endorsement, exposition, persuasion, urging, or argument are not deemed to constitute coercion;

(b) Cancel or fail to renew the franchise or selling agreement of any vehicle dealer doing business in this state without fairly compensating the dealer at a fair going business value for his or her capital investment which shall include but not be limited to tools, equipment, and parts inventory possessed by the dealer on the day he or she is notified of such cancellation or termination and which are still within the dealer's possession on the day the cancellation or termination is effective, if: (i) The capital investment has been entered into with reasonable and prudent business judgment for the purpose of fulfilling the franchise; and (ii) the cancellation or nonrenewal was not done in good faith. Good faith is defined as the duty of each party to any franchise to act in a fair and equitable manner towards each other, so as to guarantee one party freedom from coercion, intimidation, or threats of coercion or intimidation from the other party: PROVIDED, That recommendation, endorsement, exposition, persuasion, urging, or argument are not deemed to constitute a lack of good faith;

(c) Encourage, aid, abet, or teach a vehicle dealer to sell or lease vehicles through any false, deceptive, or misleading sales or financing practices including but not limited to those practices declared unlawful in this section;

(d) Coerce or attempt to coerce a vehicle dealer to engage in any practice forbidden in this section by either threats of actual cancellation or failure to renew the dealer's franchise agreement;

(e) Refuse to deliver any vehicle publicly advertised for immediate delivery to any duly licensed vehicle dealer having a franchise or contractual agreement for the retail sale or lease of new and unused vehicles sold or distributed by such manufacturer within sixty days after such dealer's order has been received in writing unless caused by inability to deliver because of shortage or curtailment of material, labor, transportation, or utility services, or by any labor or production difficulty, or by any cause beyond the reasonable control of the manufacturer;

(f) To provide under the terms of any warranty that a purchaser or lessee of any new or unused vehicle that has been sold or leased, distributed for sale or lease, or transferred into this state for resale or lease by the vehicle manufacturer may only make any warranty claim on any item included as an integral part of the vehicle against the manufacturer of that item.

Nothing in this section may be construed to impair the obligations of a contract or to prevent a manufacturer, distributor, representative, or any other person, whether or not licensed under this chapter, from requiring performance of a written contract entered into with any licensee hereunder, nor does the requirement of such performance constitute a violation of any of the provisions of this section if any such contract or the terms thereof requiring performance, have been freely entered into and executed between the contracting parties. This paragraph and subsection (14) (b) of this section do not apply to new motor vehicle manufacturers governed by chapter 46.96 RCW.

(15) Unlawful transfer of an ownership interest in a motor vehicle as defined in RCW 19.116.050.

(16) To knowingly and intentionally engage in collusion with a registered owner of a vehicle to repossess and return or resell the vehicle to the registered owner in an attempt to avoid a suspended license impound under chapter 46.55 RCW. However, compliance with chapter 62A.9A RCW in repossessing, selling, leasing, or otherwise disposing of the vehicle, including providing redemption rights to the debtor, is not a violation of this section.

(17) (a) For a dealer to enter into a new motor vehicle sales contract without disclosing in writing to a buyer of the new motor vehicle, or to a dealer in the case of an unregistered motor vehicle, any known damage and repair to the new motor vehicle if the damage exceeds five percent of the manufacturer's suggested retail price as calculated at the dealer's authorized warranty rate for labor and parts, or \$1,000, whichever amount is greater. A manufacturer or new motor vehicle dealer is not required to disclose to a dealer or buyer that glass, tires, bumpers, or cosmetic parts of a new motor vehicle were damaged at any time if the damaged item has been replaced with original or comparable equipment. A replaced part is not part of the cumulative damage required to be disclosed under this subsection.

(b) A manufacturer is required to provide the same disclosure to a dealer of any known damage or repair as required in (a) of this subsection.

(c) If disclosure of any known damage or repair is not required under this section, a buyer may not revoke or rescind a sales contract due to the fact that the new motor vehicle was damaged and repaired before completion of the sale.

(d) As used in this section:

(i) "Cosmetic parts" means parts that are attached by and can be replaced in total through the use of screws, bolts, or other fasteners

without the use of welding or thermal cutting, and includes windshields, bumpers, hoods, or trim panels.

(ii) "Manufacturer's suggested retail price" means the retail price of the new motor vehicle suggested by the manufacturer, and includes the retail delivered price suggested by the manufacturer for each accessory or item of optional equipment physically attached to the new motor vehicle at the time of delivery to the new motor vehicle dealer that is not included within the retail price suggested by the manufacturer for the new motor vehicle. [2022 c 182 § 211; 2017 c 41 § 1; 2012 c 74 § 8; 2010 c 161 § 1136. Prior: 2009 c 123 § 1; 2009 c 49 § 1; 2007 c 155 § 2; 2006 c 289 § 1; 2003 c 368 § 1; prior: 2001 c 272 § 10; 2001 c 64 § 9; 1999 c 398 § 10; 1997 c 153 § 1; 1996 c 194 § 3; 1995 c 256 § 26; 1994 c 284 § 13; 1993 c 175 § 3; 1990 c 44 § 14; 1989 c 415 § 20; 1986 c 241 § 18; 1985 c 472 § 13; 1981 c 152 § 6; 1977 ex.s. c 125 § 4; 1973 1st ex.s. c 132 § 18; 1969 c 112 § 1; 1967 ex.s. c 74 § 16.]

Intent—Effective date—2022 c 182: See notes following RCW 70A.65.240.

Effective date—2012 c 74 §§ 1-12: See note following RCW 46.17.100.

Effective date—Intent—Legislation to reconcile chapter 161, Laws of 2010 and other amendments made during the 2010 legislative session—2010 c 161: See notes following RCW 46.04.013.

Effective date—2007 c 155: See note following RCW 46.16A.300.

Prospective application—2006 c 289: "This act applies prospectively only and not retroactively. It applies only to causes of action that arise (if change is substantive) or that are commenced (if change is procedural) on or after June 7, 2006." [2006 c 289 § 2.]

Effective date—1994 c 284: See RCW 43.22A.901.

Certificate of title—Failure to transfer within specified time: RCW 46.12.650.

Glass—Limited windows—Vehicle sale requirements: RCW 46.37.430.

Odometers—Disconnecting, resetting, turning back, replacing without notifying purchaser: RCW 46.37.540 through 46.37.570.

Tires—Vehicle sale requirements: RCW 46.37.425.