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**STATE OF RHODE ISLAND**

**IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2012**

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A N A C T

RELATING TO INSURANCE - UNFAIR COMPETITION AND PRACTICES

Introduced By: Representatives Ucci and Winfield

Date Introduced: February 28, 2012

Referred To: House Corporations

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1           SECTION 1. Section 27-29-4 of the General Laws in Chapter 27-29 entitled "Unfair  
2 Competition and Practices" is hereby amended to read as follows:

3           **27-29-4. Unfair methods of competition and unfair or deceptive acts or practices**  
4 **defined.** -- The following are defined as unfair methods of competition and unfair and deceptive  
5 acts or practices in the business of insurance:

6           (1) Misrepresentations and false advertising of policies or contracts. - Making, issuing,  
7 circulating, or causing to be made, issued, or circulated, any estimate, illustration, circular, or  
8 statement, sales presentation, omission, or comparison misrepresenting the terms of any policy  
9 issued or to be issued or the benefits, conditions, or advantages promised by any policy or the  
10 dividends or share of the surplus to be received on any policy, or making any false or misleading  
11 statement as to the dividends or share of surplus previously paid on any policy, or making any  
12 misleading representation or any misrepresentation as to the financial condition of any insurer, or  
13 as to the legal reserve system upon which any life insurer operates, or using any name or title of  
14 any policy or class of policies misrepresenting the true nature of that policy or class of policies, or  
15 making any misrepresentation to any policyholder insured in any company including any  
16 intentional misquote of a premium rate, for the purpose of inducing or tending to induce the  
17 policyholder to lapse, forfeit, or surrender his or her insurance, or misrepresenting for the purpose  
18 of effecting a pledge or assignment of or effecting a loan against any policy, or misrepresenting  
19 any policy as being share or stock;

1           (2) False information and advertising generally. - Making, publishing, disseminating,  
2 circulating, or placing before the public or causing, directly or indirectly, to be made, published,  
3 disseminated, circulated, or placed before the public in a newspaper, magazine, or other  
4 publication, or in the form of a notice, circular, pamphlet, letter, or poster, or over any radio or  
5 television station, or in any other way, an advertisement, announcement, or statement containing  
6 any assertion, representation, or statement with respect to the business of insurance or with  
7 respect to any person in the conduct of his or her insurance business which is untrue, deceptive,  
8 or misleading;

9           (3) Defamation. - Making, publishing, disseminating, or circulating, directly or  
10 indirectly, or aiding, abetting, or encouraging the making, publishing, disseminating, or  
11 circulating of any oral or written statement or any pamphlet, circular, article of literature which is  
12 false or maliciously critical of or derogatory to the financial condition of an insurer, and which is  
13 calculated to injure any person engaged in the business of insurance;

14           (4) Boycott, coercion, and intimidation. - Entering into any agreement to commit, or by  
15 any concerted action committing, any act of boycott, coercion, or intimidation resulting in or  
16 tending to result in unreasonable restraint of, or monopoly in, the business of insurance;

17           (5) (i) False financial statements. - Knowingly filing with any supervisory or other public  
18 official, or knowingly making, publishing, disseminating, circulating, or delivering to any person,  
19 or placing before the public or causing directly or indirectly, to be made, published, disseminated,  
20 circulated, delivered to any person, or placed before the public any false material statement of  
21 financial condition of an insurer; or

22           (ii) Knowingly making any false entry of a material fact in any book, report, or statement  
23 of any insurer or knowingly omitting to make a true entry of any material fact pertaining to the  
24 business of the insurer in any book, report, or statement of the insurer;

25           (6) Stock operations and advisory board contracts. - Issuing or delivering or permitting  
26 agents, officers, or employees to issue or deliver agency company stock or other capital stock, or  
27 benefit certificates or shares in any common law corporation, or securities of any special or  
28 advisory board contracts or other contracts of any kind promising returns and profits as an  
29 inducement to insurance;

30           (7) (i) Unfair discrimination. - Making or permitting any unfair discrimination between  
31 individuals of the same class and equal expectation of life in the rates charged for any policy of  
32 life insurance or of life annuity or in the dividends or other benefits payable on any such policy or  
33 life annuity, or in any other of the terms and conditions of the policy; or

34           (ii) Making or permitting any unfair discrimination between individuals of the same

1 class and of essentially the same hazard in the amount of premium, policy fees, or rates charged  
2 for any policy or contract of accident or health insurance or in the benefits payable under any  
3 policy or contract, or in any of the terms or conditions of that policy, or in any other manner;

4 (iii) Making or permitting any unfair discrimination between individuals or risks of the  
5 same class and of essentially the same hazards by refusing to issue, refusing to renew, canceling,  
6 or limiting the amount of insurance coverage on a property or casualty risk because of the  
7 geographic location of the risk, unless:

8 (A) The refusal, cancellation, or limitation is for a business purpose that is not a pretext  
9 for unfair discrimination; or

10 (B) The refusal, cancellation, or limitation is required by law or regulation;

11 (iv) Making or permitting any unfair discrimination between individuals or risks of the  
12 same class and of essentially the same hazards by refusing to issue, refusing to renew, canceling,  
13 or limiting the amount of insurance coverage on a residential property risk, or the personal  
14 property contained in the residential property risk, because of the age of the residential property,  
15 unless:

16 (A) The refusal, cancellation, or limitation is for a business purpose that is not a pretext  
17 for unfair discrimination; or

18 (B) The refusal, cancellation, or limitation is required by law or regulation;

19 (v) Refusing to insure, refusing to continue to insure, or limiting the amount of coverage  
20 available to an individual because of the sex or marital status of the individual; nothing in this  
21 subsection shall prohibit an insurer from taking marital status into account for the purpose of  
22 defining persons eligible for dependent benefits; or

23 (vi) To terminate, or to modify coverage, or to refuse to issue or refuse to renew any  
24 property or casualty policy solely because the applicant or insured or any employee of either is  
25 mentally or physically impaired; provided, that this subsection shall not apply to accident and  
26 health insurance sold by a casualty insurer and, provided that this subsection shall not be  
27 interpreted to modify any other provision of law relating to the termination, modification,  
28 issuance or renewal of any insurance policy or contract;

29 (8) (i) Rebates. - Except as otherwise expressly provided by law, knowingly permitting  
30 or offering to make or making any policy or agreement as to the policy other than as plainly  
31 expressed in the policy issued on it, or paying or allowing or giving or offering to pay, allow, or  
32 give, directly or indirectly, as inducement to the policy, any rebate of premiums payable on the  
33 policy, or any special favor or advantage in the dividends or other benefits on the policy, or any  
34 valuable consideration or inducement not specified in the policy, or giving, selling, or purchasing

1 or offering to give, sell, or purchase as inducement to the policy, or in connection with the policy,  
2 any stocks, bonds, or other securities of any insurance company or other corporation, association,  
3 or partnership, or any dividends or profits accrued on the security, or anything of value not  
4 specified in the policy;

5 (ii) Nothing in subdivision (7) of this section or paragraph (i) of this subdivision shall be  
6 construed as including within the definition of discrimination or rebates any of the following  
7 practices:

8 (A) In the case of any contract of life insurance policies or life annuity, annuities paying  
9 bonuses to policyholders or abating their premiums in whole or in part out of surplus accumulated  
10 from nonparticipating insurance; provided, that any bonuses or abatement of premiums shall be  
11 fair and equitable to policyholders and for the best interests of the company and its policyholders;

12 (B) In the case of life insurance policies issued on the industrial debit plan, making  
13 allowance to policyholders who have continuously for a specified period made premium  
14 payments directly to an office of the insurer in an amount which fairly represents the saving in  
15 collection expenses; and

16 (C) Readjustment of the rate of premium for a group insurance policy based on the loss  
17 or expense experience under it, at the end of the first or any subsequent policy year of insurance  
18 under the policy, which may be made retroactive only for the policy year;

19 (9) (i) Free choice of insurance producer or insurer. - When any person, firm, or  
20 corporation engaged in the business of lending money on the security of real or personal property,  
21 or in the business of negotiating, purchasing, selling, or holding loans on the security of real  
22 property, or in the business of building, selling, or financing the sale or purchase of real property,  
23 or any trustee, director, officer, agent, or other employee of that person, firm, or corporation,  
24 requires that property insurance be procured for the property, the borrower, debtor, or purchaser  
25 shall have free choice of insurance producer and insurer through or by which the insurance is to  
26 be placed or written, subject only to the right of the builder, creditor, lender, or seller:

27 (A) To require evidence, to be produced at a reasonable time prior to commencement or  
28 renewal of risk, that the insurance providing reasonable coverage has been obtained in an amount  
29 equal to the amount required by the builder, creditor, lender, or seller;

30 (B) To require insurance in an insurer authorized to do business and having a licensed  
31 resident insurance producer agent in this state; and

32 (C) To refuse to accept insurance in a particular insurer on reasonable grounds related to  
33 solvency;

34 (ii) When any contractor or subcontractor is required to procure a surety bond or policy

1 of insurance with respect to any building or construction contract which is about to be, or which  
2 has been bid or entered into, the contractor or subcontractor shall have free choice of insurance  
3 producer and insurer through or by which the surety bond or insurance is to be written; provided,  
4 that the owner or contractor shall have the right: (A) to require evidence, to be produced at a  
5 reasonable time prior to commencement or renewal of risk, that the insurance providing  
6 reasonable coverage has been obtained in an amount equal to the amount required by the builder,  
7 creditor, lender, or seller; (B) to require insurance in an insurer authorized to do business and  
8 having a licensed resident insurance producer in this state; and (C) to refuse to accept insurance in  
9 a particular insurer on reasonable grounds related to solvency; provided, that the owner or  
10 contractor shall have the right to approve the form, sufficiency, or manner of execution of the  
11 surety bond or policy or insurance furnished by the insurance company or insurance producer  
12 selected by the contractor or subcontractor;

13 (iii) No person who lends money or extends credit may:

14 (A) Solicit insurance for the protection of real property after a person indicates interest in  
15 securing a first mortgage credit extension until that person has received a commitment in writing  
16 from the lender as to a loan or credit extension;

17 (B) Unreasonably reject a policy furnished by the borrower for the protection of the  
18 property securing the creditor lien. A rejection shall not be deemed unreasonable if it is based on  
19 reasonable standards, uniformly applied, relating to the extent of coverage required and the  
20 financial soundness and the services of an insurer. The standards shall not discriminate against  
21 any particular type of insurer, nor shall the standards call for rejection of a policy because it  
22 contains coverage in addition to that required in the credit transaction;

23 (C) Require that any borrower, mortgagor, purchaser, insurer, or insurance producer pay  
24 a separate charge, in connection with the handling of any policy required as security for a loan on  
25 real estate, or pay a separate charge to substitute the policy of one insurer for that of another. This  
26 subsection does not include the interest that may be charged on premium loans or premium  
27 advancements in accordance with the terms of the loan or credit document;

28 (D) Use or disclose, without the prior written consent of the borrower, mortgagor, or  
29 purchaser taken at a time other than the making of the loan or extension of credit, information  
30 relative to a policy which is required by the credit transaction, for the purpose of replacing the  
31 insurance; or

32 (E) Require any procedures or conditions of duly licensed insurance producers or  
33 insurers not customarily required of those insurance producers or insurers affiliated or in any way  
34 connected with the person who lends money or extends credit;

1 (iv) Every person who lends money or extends credit and who solicits insurance on real  
2 and personal property subject to paragraph (iii) of this subdivision shall explain to the borrower in  
3 writing that the insurance related to the credit extension may be purchased from an insurer or  
4 insurance producer of the borrower's choice, subject only to the lender's right to reject a given  
5 insurer or insurance producer as provided in paragraph (iii)(B) of this subdivision. Compliance  
6 with disclosures as to insurance required by truth in lending laws or comparable state laws shall  
7 be compliance with this subsection;

8 (v) This requirement for a commitment shall not apply in cases where the premium for  
9 the required insurance is to be financed as part of the loan or extension of credit involving  
10 personal property transactions;

11 (vi) The commissioner shall have the power to examine and investigate those insurance  
12 related activities of any person or insurer that the commissioner believes may be in violation of  
13 this section. Any affected person may submit to the commissioner a complaint or material  
14 pertinent to the enforcement of this section;

15 (vii) Nothing in this section shall prevent a person who lends money or extends credit  
16 from placing insurance on real or personal property in the event the mortgagor, borrower, or  
17 purchaser has failed to provide required insurance in accordance with the terms of the loan or  
18 credit document;

19 (viii) Nothing contained in this section shall apply to credit life or credit accident and  
20 health insurance.

21 (10) Notice of free choice of insurance producer or insurer. - Every debtor, borrower, or  
22 purchaser of property with respect to which insurance of any kind on the property is required in  
23 connection with a debt or loan secured by the property or in connection with the sale of the  
24 property, shall be informed in writing by the builder, creditor, lender, or seller, of his or her right  
25 of free choice in the selection of the insurance producer and insurer through or by which the  
26 insurance is to be placed. There shall be no interference, either directly or indirectly, with the  
27 borrower's, debtor's, or purchaser's free choice of an insurance procedure and of an insurer which  
28 complies with the requirements of this section, and the builder, creditor, lender, seller, owner, or  
29 contractor shall not refuse the policy tendered by the borrower, debtor, purchaser, contractor, or  
30 subcontractor. Upon notice of any refusal of the tendered policy, the insurance commissioner  
31 shall order the builder, creditor, lender, seller, owner, or contractor to accept the tendered policy,  
32 if the commissioner determines that the refusal is not in accordance with the requirements of this  
33 section. Failure to comply with an order of the insurance commissioner shall be deemed a  
34 violation of this section;

1           (11) Using insurance information to detriment of another. - Whenever the instrument  
2 requires that the purchaser, mortgagor, or borrower furnish insurance of any kind on real property  
3 being conveyed or is collateral security to a loan, the mortgagee, vendor, or lender shall refrain  
4 from disclosing or using any and all insurance information to his or her or its own advantage and  
5 to the detriment of either the borrower, purchaser, mortgagor, insurance company, or agency  
6 complying with the requirements relating to insurance;

7           (12) Prohibited group enrollments. - No insurer shall offer more than one group policy of  
8 insurance through any person unless that person is licensed, at a minimum, as an insurance  
9 producer. This prohibition shall not apply to employer-employee relationships, or to any of these  
10 enrollments;

11           (13) Failure to maintain complaint handling procedures. - No insurer shall fail to  
12 maintain a complete record of all the complaints it received since the date of its last examination  
13 pursuant to the general laws providing for examination of insurers. This record shall indicate the  
14 total number of complaints, their classification by line of insurance, the nature of each complaint,  
15 the disposition of each complaint, and the time it took to process each complaint. For the  
16 purposes of this subsection, "complaint" means any written communication primarily expressing  
17 a grievance;

18           (14) Misrepresentation in insurance applications. - Making false or fraudulent statements  
19 or representations on or relative to an application for a policy, for the purpose of obtaining a fee,  
20 commission, money, or other benefit from any insurers, insurance producer, or individual person;  
21 and

22           ~~(15) Requiring that repairs be made to an automobile at a specified auto body repair shop  
23 or interfering with the insured's or claimant's free choice of repair facility. The insured or  
24 claimant shall be promptly informed by the insurer of his or her free choice in the selection of an  
25 auto body repair shop. Once the insured or claimant has advised the insurer that an auto body  
26 repair shop has been selected, the insurer may not recommend that a different auto body repair  
27 shop be selected to repair the automobile. An auto body repair shop may file a complaint with the  
28 department of business regulation alleging a violation of this subdivision (15). Whenever the  
29 department of business regulation has reason to believe that an insurer has violated this  
30 subdivision (15), the department shall conduct an investigation and may convene a hearing. A  
31 complaint filed by an auto body repair shop must be accompanied by a statement written and  
32 signed by the insured or claimant setting forth the factual basis of the complaint, and the insured  
33 or claimant must voluntarily appear and testify at any administrative proceedings on the  
34 complaint.~~

1 SECTION 2. Section 27-9.1-4 of the General Laws in Chapter 27-9.1 entitled "Unfair  
2 Claims Settlement Practices Act" is hereby amended to read as follows:

3 **27-9.1-4. "Unfair claims practices" defined.** -- (a) Any of the following acts by an  
4 insurer, if committed in violation of section 27-9.1-3, constitutes an unfair claims practice:

5 (1) Misrepresenting to claimants and insured relevant facts or policy provisions relating  
6 to coverage at issue;

7 (2) Failing to acknowledge and act with reasonable promptness upon pertinent  
8 communications with respect to claims arising under its policies;

9 (3) Failing to adopt and implement reasonable standards for the prompt investigation and  
10 settlement of claims arising under its policies;

11 (4) Not attempting in good faith to effectuate prompt, fair, and equitable settlement of  
12 claims submitted in which liability has become reasonably clear;

13 (5) Compelling insured, beneficiaries, or claimants to institute suits to recover amounts  
14 due under its policies by offering substantially less than the amounts ultimately recovered in suits  
15 brought by them;

16 (6) Refusing to pay claims without conducting a reasonable investigation;

17 (7) Failing to affirm or deny coverage of claims within a reasonable time after having  
18 completed its investigation related to the claim or claims;

19 (8) Attempting to settle or settling claims for less than the amount that a reasonable  
20 person would believe the insured or beneficiary was entitled by reference to written or printed  
21 advertising material accompanying or made part of an application;

22 (9) Attempting to settle or settling claims on the basis of an application that was  
23 materially altered without notice to, or knowledge or consent of, the insured;

24 (10) Making claims payments to an insured or beneficiary without indicating the  
25 coverage under which each payment is being made;

26 (11) Unreasonably delaying the investigation or payment of claims by requiring both a  
27 formal proof of loss form and subsequent verification that would result in duplication of  
28 information and verification appearing in the formal proof of loss form;

29 (12) Failing in the case of claims denials or offers of compromise settlement to promptly  
30 provide a reasonable and accurate explanation of the basis of those actions;

31 (13) Failing to provide forms necessary to present claims within ten (10) calendar days  
32 of a request with reasonable explanations regarding their use;

33 (14) Failing to adopt and implement reasonable standards to assure that the repairs of a  
34 repairer owned by or required to be used by the insurer are performed in a workmanlike manner;



1 (15) Misleading a claimant as to the applicable statute of limitations;

2 (16) Failing to respond to a claim within thirty (30) days, unless the insured shall agree  
3 to a longer period;

4 ~~(17) Engaging in any act or practice of intimidation, coercion, threat or~~  
5 ~~misrepresentation of consumers rights, for or against any insured person, claimant, or entity to~~  
6 ~~use a particular rental car company for motor vehicle replacement services or products; provided,~~  
7 ~~however, nothing shall prohibit any insurance company, agent or adjuster from providing to such~~  
8 ~~insured person, claimant or entity the names of a rental car company with which arrangements~~  
9 ~~have been made with respect to motor vehicle replacement services; provided, that the rental car~~  
10 ~~company is licensed pursuant to Rhode Island general laws section 31-5-33; or~~

11 ~~(18) Refusing to honor a "direction to pay" executed by an insured, claimant, indicating~~  
12 ~~that the insured or claimant, wishes to have the insurance company directly pay his or her motor~~  
13 ~~vehicle replacement vehicle rental benefit to the rental car company of the consumer's choice;~~  
14 ~~provided, that the rental car company is licensed pursuant to Rhode Island general laws section~~  
15 ~~31-5-33. Nothing in this section shall be construed to prevent the insurance company's ability to~~  
16 ~~question or challenge the amount charged, in accordance with its policy provisions, and the~~  
17 ~~requirements of the department of business regulation;~~

18 ~~(19) Modifying any published manual (i.e. motors, mitchells, or any automated appraisal~~  
19 ~~system) relating to auto body repair without prior agreement between the parties;~~

20 ~~(20) Failing to use a manual or system in its entirety in the appraisal of a motor vehicle;~~

21 ~~(21) Refusing to compensate an auto body shop for documented charges as identified~~  
22 ~~through industry recognized software programs or systems for paint and refinishing materials in~~  
23 ~~auto body repair claims; and/or~~

24 ~~(22) Failing to comply with the requirements of Rhode Island General Laws section 31-~~  
25 ~~47-12.1.~~

26 ~~(23) Failure to have an appraisal performed by a licensed appraiser where the motor~~  
27 ~~vehicle has sustained damage estimated to exceed two thousand five hundred dollars (\$2,500).~~  
28 ~~Said licensed appraiser referred to herein must be unaffiliated with the repair facility repairing the~~  
29 ~~subject motor vehicle.~~

30 ~~(24) Failure to perform a supplemental appraisal inspection of a vehicle within four (4)~~  
31 ~~business days after a request is received from an auto body repair shop.~~

32 ~~(b) (1) Nothing contained in subsections 27-9.1-4(a)(19), (20), & (21) of this chapter~~  
33 ~~shall be construed to interfere with an auto body repair facility's contract with an insurance~~  
34 ~~company.~~

1 ~~(2) If an insurance company and auto body repair facility have contracted under a direct~~  
2 ~~repair program or any similar program thereto the provisions of subsections 27-9.1-4(a)(19), (20)~~  
3 ~~& (21) shall not apply.~~

4 ~~(3) If the insured or claimant elects to have the vehicle repaired at a shop of his or her~~  
5 ~~choice, the insurer shall not limit or discount the reasonable repair costs based upon the charges~~  
6 ~~that would have been incurred had the vehicle been repaired by the insurer's chosen shop(s).~~

7 SECTION 3. Title 27 of the General Laws entitled "INSURANCE" is hereby amended  
8 by adding thereto the following chapter:

9 CHAPTER 10.4

10 MOTOR VEHICLE PROPERTY DAMAGE CLAIMS SETTLEMENT ACT

11 **27-10.4-1. Purpose of chapter.** -- The general assembly declares that it is concerned  
12 with ensuring fair claims settlement practices with regard to motor vehicle property damage  
13 claims. The purpose of this chapter is to set forth standards for the disposition of such claims as it  
14 relates to vehicles that are to be repaired in auto body repair shops in the state of Rhode Island.

15 The director of the department of business regulation shall promulgate rules and  
16 regulations not inconsistent with purpose of this chapter.

17 **27-10.4-2. Definitions.** – (1) “Automobile body shop” referred to as “auto body shop”,  
18 means and includes any establishment, garage, or work area enclosed within a building where  
19 repairs are made or caused to be made to motor vehicle bodies, including fenders, bumpers,  
20 chassis and similar components of motor vehicle bodies as distinguished from the seats, motor,  
21 transmission, and other accessories for propulsion and general running gear of motor vehicles,  
22 except as provided in section 5-38-20;

23 (2) “Claimant” means a person, other than the insured, who claims that the insured is  
24 legally liable to them for damages resulting from an act, occurrence or other covered event as a  
25 result of which the insured’s policy may be obligated to provide coverage;

26 (3) “Insured” means the party named on a policy or certificate as the individual(s) with  
27 legal rights to the benefits provided by the policy;

28 (4) “Insurer” means any person, reciprocal exchange, interinsurer, Lloyds insurer,  
29 fraternal benefit society, and any other legal entity engaged in the business of insurance,  
30 including agents, brokers, insurance producers, adjusters and third-party administrators. For the  
31 purposes of this chapter, the entities in this subdivision shall be deemed to be engaged in the  
32 business of insurance and subject to this chapter;

33 (5) “Motor Vehicle” means any automobile, truck, or other self-propelled vehicle of any  
34 type; and

1           (6) “Person” means any natural or artificial entity including, but not limited to,  
2 individuals, partnerships, associations, trusts or corporations, or limited liability corporations.

3           **27-10.4-3. Rental vehicles.** – It is an improper claim settlement practice for any  
4 domestic, or foreign insurer transacting business in this state, or any employee or agent of the  
5 insurer to:

6           (1) Engage in any act or practice of intimidation, coercion, threat or misrepresentation of  
7 consumers’ rights, for or against any insured person, claimant, or entity to use a particular rental  
8 car company for motor vehicle replacement services or products; provided, however, nothing  
9 shall prohibit any insurance company, agent or adjuster from providing to such insured person,  
10 claimant or entity the names of a rental car company with which arrangements have been made  
11 with respect to motor vehicle replacement services; provided, that the rental car company is  
12 licensed pursuant to Rhode Island general laws section 31-5-33; or

13           (2) Refuse to honor a “direction to pay” executed by an insured, claimant, indicating that  
14 the insured or claimant, wishes to have the insurance company directly pay his or her motor  
15 vehicle replacement vehicle rental benefit to the rental car company of the consumer’s choice;  
16 provided, that the rental car company is licensed pursuant to Rhode Island general laws section  
17 31-5-33. Nothing in this section shall be construed to prevent the insurance company’s ability to  
18 question or challenge the amount charged, in accordance with its policy provisions, and the  
19 requirements of the department of business regulation.

20           **27-10.4-4. Steering prohibited.** – It is an improper claim settlement practice for any  
21 domestic, foreign, or alien insurer transacting business in this state, or any employee or agent of  
22 the insurer to:

23           (1) Require that repairs be made to an automobile at a specified auto body repair shop or  
24 interfering with the insured’s or claimant’s free choice of repair facility. The insured or claimant  
25 shall be promptly informed by the insurer of his or her free choice in the selection of an auto body  
26 repair shop. Once the insured or claimant has advised the insurer that an auto body repair shop  
27 has been selected, the insurer may not recommend that a different auto body repair shop be  
28 selected to repair the automobile. An auto body repair shop may file a complaint with the  
29 department of business regulation alleging a violation of this subdivision. Whenever the  
30 department of business regulation has reason to believe that an insurer has violated this  
31 subsection, the department shall conduct an investigation and may convene a hearing. A  
32 complaint filed by an auto body repair shop must be accompanied by a statement written and  
33 signed by the insured or claimant setting forth the factual basis of the complaint, and the insured  
34 or claimant must voluntarily appear and testify at any administrative proceedings on the

1 complaint.

2 **27-10.4-5. Procedure pages.** – It is an improper claim settlement practice for any  
3 domestic, foreign, or alien insurer transacting business in this state, or any employee or agent of  
4 the insurer to:

5 (1) Modify any published manual (i.e., Motor, Mitchell or any automotive appraisal  
6 system) relating to auto body repair without prior agreement between the parties;

7 (2) Fail to use a manual or system in its entirety in the appraisal of a motor vehicle;

8 (3) Refuse to compensate an auto body shop for documented charges as identified  
9 through industry recognized software programs or systems for paint and refinishing materials in  
10 auto body repair claims; and/or

11 (4) Fail to comply with the requirements of section 31-47-12.1.

12 (5) Nothing contained in subdivisions 27-10.4-5(1)(2), and (3) of this chapter shall be  
13 construed to interfere with an auto body repair facility’s contract with an insurance company.

14 (6) If an insurance company and auto body shop have contracted under a direct repair  
15 program or any similar program thereto the provisions of subdivisions 27-10.4-5(1), (2), and (3)  
16 shall not apply.

17 (7) If the insured or claimant elects to have the vehicle repaired at a shop of his or her  
18 choice, the insurer shall not limit or discount the reasonable repair costs based upon the charges  
19 that would have been incurred had the vehicle been repaired by the insurer’s chosen shop(s).

20 **27-10.4-6. Total losses.** – It is an improper claim settlement practice for any domestic,  
21 foreign, or alien insurer transacting business in this state, or any employee or agent of the insurer  
22 to:

23 (1) Deem a motor vehicle a total loss if the cost to rebuild or reconstruct the motor  
24 vehicle to its pre-accident condition is less than seventy-five percent (75%) of the “fair market  
25 value” of the motor vehicle immediately preceding the time it was damaged.

26 (2) “Fair market value” means the retail value of a motor vehicle as set forth in a current  
27 edition of a nationally recognized compilation of retail values commonly used by the automotive  
28 industry to establish values of motor vehicles.

29 (3) Nothing herein shall be construed to require a vehicle be deemed a total loss if the  
30 total cost to rebuild or reconstruct the motor vehicle to its pre-accident condition is greater than  
31 seventy-five percent (75%) of the fair market value of the motor vehicle immediately preceding  
32 the time it was damaged.

33 **27-10.4-7. Appraisals required.** – It is an improper claim settlement practice for any  
34 domestic, foreign, or alien insurer transacting business in this state, or any employee or agent of

1 the insurer to:

2 (1) Fail to have an appraisal performed by a licensed appraiser where the motor vehicle  
3 has sustained damage estimated to exceed two thousand five hundred dollars (\$2,500). Said  
4 licensed appraiser referred to herein must be unaffiliated with the repair facility repairing the  
5 subject motor vehicle; and

6 (2) Fail to perform a supplemental appraisal inspection of a vehicle within four (4)  
7 business days after a request is received from an auto body shop.

8 **27-10.4-8. Agreed price for repairs to motor vehicles.** – (a) When determining the  
9 amount an insurer must pay for repair a damaged motor vehicle, every insurer, agent, and  
10 employee must:

11 (1) Negotiate in good faith with an auto body shop chosen by an insured or claimant; and

12 (2) Reach an agreed price with the auto body shop chosen by the insured or claimant to  
13 repair the vehicle to pre-accident condition. In reaching an agreed price with the chosen auto  
14 body shop, an insurer must negotiate all aspects of the repair in good faith, including, but not  
15 limited to, the auto body labor rate charged by the auto body shop.

16 (b) If an insurer and an auto body shop do not reach an agreed price to repair the vehicle  
17 to pre-accident condition, the insurer may not:

18 (1) Delay concluding the claim and must promptly issue payment for the amount it  
19 determined; or

20 (2) Require an insured or claimant to have the repairs performed at a different auto body  
21 shop.

22 (c) If an insurer and auto body shop do not reach an agreed price, the auto body shop may  
23 assert a civil action against the insurer, its employees and agents for all amounts in dispute and  
24 any other damages resulting therefrom pursuant to section 27-10.4-10.

25 **27-10.4-9. Penalties.** – For each violation of this chapter, the offending insurance  
26 company, its employees and agents, shall be fined a sum not to exceed five thousand dollars  
27 (\$5,000) by the department of business regulation.

28 **27-10.4-10. Private actions.** – (1) Any insured or claimant, or licensed auto body repair  
29 facility may bring an action for money damages against an insurer, its employees and agents, as a  
30 result of the use or employment by an insurer, employee, agent, or person of a method, act or  
31 practice declared unlawful by sections 27-10.4-3, 27-10.4-5, 27-10.4-6, and 27-10.4-8.  
32 Notwithstanding any provisions of law to the contrary, all such actions may be brought in the  
33 small claims, district, and superior court of the state of Rhode Island in the county in which the  
34 insurer maintains its principal place of business. If the insurer is a foreign entity all such actions

1 shall be brought in the county in which the party bringing the action resides. In the case of small  
2 claims actions brought under this section, the filing fee shall be eighty dollars (\$80.00).

3 (2) In any action brought under this section, in addition to the relief provided in this  
4 section, the court may award, in its discretion, reasonable attorneys' fees and costs, and may  
5 provide other equitable relief that it deems necessary or proper.

6 (3) Notwithstanding any provision of the public or general laws to the contrary, this  
7 chapter shall not be construed to prevent an insured or claimant from assigning its rights to an  
8 auto body shop for any claims arising out of the damage to its motor vehicle.

9 **27-10.4-11. Severability.** – If any provision of this chapter or the application of the  
10 provision to any person or circumstances shall be held invalid, the remainder of the chapter and  
11 the application of the provision to any person or circumstances other than those as to which it is  
12 held invalid shall not be affected by that invalidity.

13 SECTION 4. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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LC01801/SUB A  
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EXPLANATION  
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
OF

A N A C T  
RELATING TO INSURANCE - UNFAIR COMPETITION AND PRACTICES

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1           This act would delete the section of law which requires that an insured or claimant be  
2 promptly informed by the insurer of his or her free choice in the selection of an auto body repair  
3 shop and would set forth standards for the disposition of motor vehicle property damage claims  
4 that are to be repaired in auto body shops in Rhode Island.

5           This act would take effect upon passage.

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LC01801/SUB A  
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