STATEMENT BY SENATOR STROM THURMOND (D-SC) ON SENATE FLOOR IN SUPPORT OF S. 3500, THE AUTO LABELING BILL, MAY 14, 1958.

MR. PRESIDENT:

I thank the distinguished Senator from Oklahoma for his kind remarks.

As a member of the Subcommittee on Automobile Marketing Practices, and as a coauthor of the bill, I wish to point out that the basic philosophy of S. 3500 is to free the industry from so-called sharp marketing practices, without in any way interfering with the rights of businessmen or the rights of the public.

It gives the car buyer information affixed to a label on the windshield of each new car, about automobile prices and methods of delivery without interfering with the right of the manufacturer to price or deliver the car in any way it wants to. At the same time, the bargaining between the car buyer and the automobile dealer is completely unrestricted.

S. 3500 simply gives the car buyer the minimum facts he needs in order to make an intelligent choice on the biggest purchase he ever makes -- except for his home. It will allow him to have some protection against the price-packing automobile dealer who is able to entice the public into his showroom with offers of impossible large allowances, which turn out to be just the amount the new car price was boosted in the first place.

Most automobile dealers want to sell their product -- the most desirable product this country makes -- in an ethical, straightforward way so that they can hold their heads up among the other retailers along Mainstreet, U. S. A. But they have
been forced to resort to these bad-sales tactics in order to meet competition from the wheel-and-deal operators.

S. 3500 puts an end to this destructive race to see who can make the wildest claims and mislead the public the most. By making the manufacturer’s suggested list price available, no dealer can long survive if he tries to mislead the public.

I strongly believe that it will do much to restore public confidence in the industry, and will help materially the sales of cars, thus stimulating the entire economy.

It has been a great pleasure for me to serve as a member of the Automobile Market Practices Subcommittee, of which the able and distinguished Senator from Oklahoma (Mr. Monroney) is chairman.

We have learned a great deal about the automobile industry and about automobiles during our various hearings. I desire to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to the distinguished Senator from Oklahoma for his fine work and for the magnificent service which he has rendered to the American people as chairman of the Automobile Marketing Practices Subcommittee of the Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce. I feel he has done a very fine job and deserves the commendation of the American people.