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Right to repair

By Ethan Baton Community spectrum

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I own Alaska Cell Repair in Palmer, and my business has been fixing phones and tablets with cracked screens, bad batteries, broken charge ports, waterlogged parts, and more for over a decade. We offer a variety of electronic repair work on other devices as well.

We love fixing stuff for our community and we pride ourselves on being knowledgeable with our services and repairs. People come in, with their phone looking out of commission and/or not functioning at all. If they went to an “authorized” repair provider, they’d have a long drive, or a long wait for shipping, and in the best case scenario, a pricier bill. Oftentimes, they’d be told their device is unfixable, and sometimes talked into an upgrade, even if it’s just a charge port full of lint.

Repairs are getting harder though, manufacturers may limit access to spare parts, create brand specific tools, and won’t share the schematics. Keeping proprietary limitations on devices that you own. The more often that happens, the less people consider repair as an option, and the harder it gets to run a steady local business, and provide the community with affordable options to resolve their tech issues.

Make, use, toss and pollute. It’s a system that benefits you if you sell new things, but it’s expensive for consumers and produces a lot of pollution. We are going through electronic devices at record-breaking rates, and e-waste is the fastest growing part of the U.S. municipal waste stream.

We can turn that system around by giving people what they need to fix what they already have. That is the goal of the Right to Repair measure SB 111 and HB 162, pending right now in Juneau. The proposed reforms would require manufacturers to

sell parts and tools that the authorized repair providers have access to, and make the service manuals available to prevent a monopoly on repairs.

If we want to keep the repair shops we have now on our Main Streets, we need to stop waiting and pass Right to Repair this year. We have been debating Right to Repair rules for many years. Proponents have argued that these reforms would help local small businesses, cut waste and reliance on manufacturing and the supply chain, and save consumers money.

Opponents -- including many large tech manufacturers -- have claimed that a monopoly on repair access benefits consumers because only “authorized” repair is safe or of sufficient quality. Essentially, they argue that consumers can’t choose for themselves who to trust for repairs.

For two years, experts at the Federal Trade Commission studied the issue and considered the arguments for and against Right to Repair. They released a report that found there was “scant evidence” to support manufacturers justifications for restricting repair, but that repair monopolies considerably harmed consumers, small businesses and the environment.

It’s time to put this issue to rest and stop obstructing Alaska’s local repair market. States ranging from Texas to Colorado to Oregon have taken action on this issue, and it’s time for our legislators to give Alaskans the freedom to fix our own stuff.

Tags

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