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Why do Alaska and 49 other states have Auto Dealer Franchise Laws?

In 1978, the United States Supreme Court recognized the need for motor vehicle dealer franchise laws:

“Dealers are, with few exceptions, completely dependent on the manufacturer for their supply of cars. When the dealer has invested to the extent required to secure a franchise, he becomes, in a real sense, the economic captive of his manufacturer. The substantial investment of his own personal funds by the dealer in the business, the inability to convert easily the facilities to other uses, the dependence upon a single manufacturer for supply of automobiles, and the difficulty of obtaining a franchise from another manufacturer **all contribute toward making the dealer an easy prey for domination by the factory.** On the other hand, from the standpoint of the automobile manufacturer, any single dealer is expendable. The faults of the factory-dealer system are directly attributable to the superior market position of the manufacturer.”

The National Automobile Dealers Association also explained the compelling need for state franchise laws in its recent comments to the FTC:

“the simple fact is that auto manufacturers retain to this day a massive economic power advantage over their franchised dealers, resulting from market structure, manufacturer behavior, and intrusion in the market by the federal antitrust statutes. And manufacturers often use this excess power to overreach and act opportunistically in their relationships with their dealers, to the detriment of dealers and ultimately consumers. **The state franchise laws that have been enacted operate to counteract these anomalies and to afford the dealers a reasonable opportunity to negotiate their economic relationships.**”