

This week I was visited by automotive dealers from my district, including two whose businesses had been shuttered in recent weeks as a result of General Motors and Chrysler decisions to cancel their franchise agreements.

Having just gone through the pain of having to close their doors, lay off employees, and grapple with the idea that their livelihood had been taken away, each auto dealer I met with was left wondering the same question: "Why?" Why had GM and Chrysler chosen one dealership for closure over another?

In the few months since GM and Chrysler announced they would select more than 1,800 dealerships for closure, almost no answers have been provided regarding the methodology automakers used to sacrifice one dealership over another. Both the automakers and the Administration have refused to adequately disclose their criteria and today the decision making process remains shrouded in secrecy.

Furthermore, the automakers and the Administration have yet to provide any hard figures on exactly how these closures will make the companies healthier. As time passes the automakers silence only raises more questions.

Many dealers are wondering if the decision to close their business is a form of nefarious political retribution.

I am not the only Member of Congress hearing this story. All across Capitol Hill Members are hearing from auto dealers who have been part of their community's economic backbone for decades that, above all else, they're left with a sense of bewilderment as to how they were selected for closure.

Taxpayers have bailed out the big autos to the tune of billions of dollars. While the survival of auto dealerships, and all businesses, is normally a function of a free and competitive market, the recent government bailout and takeover of GM and Chrysler means this issue now deserves public scrutiny.

With more than 100,000 jobs and millions of dollars at stake, Americans should be told how and why GM and Chrysler picked the winners and losers.

After more than two months of inaction by both the Administration and the automakers, it is time Congress step up to the plate.

In an effort to help get those answers, this week I officially requested that the House Judiciary Committee use its power of subpoena to obtain GM and Chrysler records relating to their closure decisions. I firmly believe making those documents public will answer many of these questions.

The House Judiciary Subcommittee on Commercial and Administrative Law has scheduled a hearing on the impacts of the auto industry bankruptcies for July 21st and this issue should be a key part of that discussion.

Many of my colleagues have expressed their concern over the automakers decision to shutter dealerships. Legislation pending in Congress which would require the automakers to honor their franchise agreements is a good first step, but it won't clarify the questions swirling around GM and Chrysler's choices.

As a former small business owner I understand the challenges and hardships businesses face every day. Sadly, with our continued economic decline and unemployment still rising, it is likely that even more dealerships will be forced to close for financial reasons.

Many of the dealerships selected for sacrifice were profitable, including some in my district. While it is arguable that GM and Chrysler's reduction in the number of dealerships to become more financially healthy makes sense, shutting down profitable franchises which were providing good paying jobs makes no sense at all.

This process requires greater transparency and if the Administration and automakers won't do what is right, Congress should use its power of subpoena and put these questions to rest once and for all.

As printed in [The Hill Blog](#) on July 17, 2009