

## ASA Hosts Capitol Hill Summit

# Congressional, Automotive Leaders Discuss Hispanic Automotive Technician Issues

Representatives of the automotive industry and Congress met on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., Oct. 1 to discuss the shortage of automotive technicians and how that shortage could be offset by tapping into the growing Hispanic population. Also present were educators, regulators and other interested individuals.

The Automotive Service Association (ASA), National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) and the National Automobile Dealers Association (NADA) jointly hosted the Hispanic Automotive Technician Summit.

The summit was co-chaired by U.S. Sen. Saxby Chambliss, R-Ga., chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee's Subcommittee on Immigration, and U.S. Rep. Ciro Rodriguez, D-Texas, chairman of the House of Representatives' Hispanic Caucus.

ASA President Ron Pyle opened the summit and told the participants, "Our goal today is to bring together the automotive industry, educators, members of Congress, regulators and other interested individuals to discuss the recruitment and work force development of Spanish-speaking automotive service technicians."

According to the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), the demand for automotive service technicians is expected to increase through the year 2010. Many factors are fueling this demand, including a growing number of



U.S. Rep. Ciro Rodriguez



U.S. Sen. Saxby Chambliss



Mike Anderson

vehicles on America's roads and the increasing complexity of automobiles. As automobiles become more and more complex, high quality technician training becomes an absolute necessity. However, only a small number of technical education programs and seminars are currently available in Spanish.

At the technician summit, both Chambliss and Rodriguez spoke on the issues of population diversity and change and how important it is for the automotive industry to work collectively toward providing employment opportunities to the fastest growing minority group in the United States.

"Mechanics are needed in many industries, including the military, but training has to begin with the private sector," Rodriguez said. "We're willing to work with you to make sure there are training programs available for Hispanics."

"We have to make sure there is an effort, both in the public sector and private sector, to find solutions and to funnel resources

for job training and apprenticeship programs," Rodriguez said.

Chambliss said, "We need highly trained individuals from all segments of the population to fill the need of auto technicians." The automotive industry needs to train and hire Hispanic individuals as one answer to the technician shortage. The Hispanic population is growing and provides a pool of talented people. A significant barrier, Chambliss reiterated, is the lack of Spanish language educational programs.

With an overflow crowd taking part in the summit, the automotive industry was represented by independent repairers, automobile manufacturers, dealers and vocational educators.

Panelists speaking at the summit were:

- Mike Anderson, owner of WagonWorks Collision Center in Alexandria, Va., and a member of ASA's Collision Division Operations Committee,
- Sue Allison, U.S. Department of Labor, deputy director for the Business Relations Group.