

Statement of Alicia Purvis, Baton Rouge, La.

In March 2006, I found a used 2003 Volkswagen Golf on AutoTrader.com for sale. After sending a \$500 deposit to the seller to hold the vehicle, I eventually purchased the Golf for \$10,000. The seller, Dean Ghewalla was actually selling the vehicle on behalf of Bryan Auto Body in Texas.

I had the car inspected by a Volkswagen dealer in my hometown of Baton Rouge, La. Southpoint Volkswagen found that there was extensive frame damage as well as parts missing from the Golf's undercarriage. They also discovered a bent rear axle and a damaged evaporator system on the fuel tank. I found out that the Golf had been in a serious collision before I purchased it – information that would have discouraged me from buying the vehicle had I known. I then got a second estimate on the damages to the Golf from Fender Mender Paint & Body in Hammond, La. They said that repairs would cost \$965, which was too much for me to afford on my college-student budget.

Then, on July 31, 2006, while driving on the highway with my mother and brother in the car, the Golf's axle broke and separated from the vehicle. The car spun several times and collided with a concrete barrier. Luckily, no other vehicle was involved and neither I nor my family members were hurt. The broken axle was clearly visible on the highway, and I believe that the repairs made to the Golf after its prior collision were done improperly and led to the faulty axle.

My insurance company, Progressive, evaluated the damage to the car and decided that it was a total loss. They offered \$13,300 to purchase the vehicle from me rather than repair it for me. After Progressive found out that the Golf had been a total loss before I purchased it, they rescinded their original offer and gave me a reduced salvage offer of \$7,882. That reduced payment wasn't even enough to pay off the loan I had to take out to buy the car in the first place.

If I had been able to check the Golf's history while I was thinking about purchasing the car, I would have saved a whole lot of trouble. What if another car had been involved in the collision where the axle fell off? My family and I could have been seriously injured or even killed. The government needs to create this title database to prevent auto fraud from happening to other consumers – there are lives at stake.

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