

Short Comment Regarding a Proposed Exemption (Under 17 U.S.C. 1201)

Item 1. Commenter Information

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Item 2. Proposed Class Addressed

Proposed Class 21: Vehicle software – diagnosis, repair, or modification

Item 3. Statement Regarding Proposed Exemption

During the years of 2006 through 2008, I worked for a California firm called The Okori Group. One of our clients was Vetronix, a leading manufacturer of independent / third-party vehicle diagnostic scanners, where I designed and implemented their new tool: the MasterTech VCI.

The most interesting story I have about this product, however, is the day that I became a user.

I had, for a long time, owned a 1987 Cadillac Deville. This vehicle was very old, and many would assume to be totally "obsolete", but actually came out just after computers became popular for usage in cars: it has a computerized fuel injection, and has a smog access port.

I was having the stereotypical "strange warning light comes on occasionally" problem, and the dealer had no idea what was wrong. Frankly, they didn't seem to even have the tools required to still diagnose any of the issues with my car (assuming those tools ever worked well before).

Vetronix, however, had over the years built alternative implementations of all of the protocols used by all of these older cars, so I was able to dig through the parts bin, find the adapter to plug a real MasterTech (non-VCI) unit into my car's pre-OBD-II GM OBD port, and took her out for a spin: when the light turned on, I pulled the error code, and shocked the engineers at my dealer, who were then able to fix the problem with a couple hours of trivial mechanics.

Had Vetronix not been able to implement these alternative tools, I may never have been able to figure out what was wrong with my car. With that one tool—the MasterTech, and later the new MasterTech VCI—you can diagnose the issues of virtually any car with a reasonably consistent user interface: I think that is powerful, and extends the longevity of these vehicles.