

HOME WORK

Lawmakers review, discuss appliance repair legislation

APPLIANCE DOCTOR



JOE GAGNON

My knees shook and my voice broke with emotion as I tried to explain to them the crookedness of some appliance repair companies.

That was 15 years ago, and things haven't changed much. The companies that I spoke about are still in business, and still ripping off consumers. Almost every year since, I go back and plead to have the appliance repair bill enacted into law.

Back in Lansing again

I went into a room with the leaders of lobbying groups who opposed this bill right from the get-go. There were plenty of words exchanged, the air was thick and, in the end I believe we reached an understanding. As I left, I saw a state senator who sponsored the bill last year but couldn't get it passed. "I'm looking at you, Joe, with a feeling of embarrassment because I could-

n't get your bill passed," he said. I felt sorry for this gentleman because I know he was sincere and tried hard. It's tough to work in our system of government even though it's the best there is. In the next few weeks I will once again stand in front of a group of senators and present a case why this bill should be passed and made law.

I've lost count of how many times I've worked with television stations, exposing rip-offs in the service industry. We show companies doing the same things, over and over, such as changing parts that are not defective and overcharging consumers on labor.

The rip-off story goes on and on in many different ways and I've asked everyone for help for so many years, I'm blue in the face. I've even gone to the state attorney general who said she would look into it.

What you can do

Ask yourself what you can do. First, you must be smart before you call for appliance service. Call around and check out the company to find out how reliable it is. Call the Better Business Bureau. (In Farmington Hills, city officials set up an ethics committee. Maybe your community has one of these, too.) Call your chamber of commerce and find out how to start a referral system in your city.

Check on the contractor by asking your neighbor or any-

body, just don't use somebody without doing a fair amount of checking. Some of these rip-offs have been around for over 20 years and even though these companies are exposed, they remain in business.

To the senior citizens who read this column, I have a stern message for you. I have spent the past 20 years speaking to you at seminars across this state and yet so many of the calls I investigate are rip-offs involving seniors. It is hard to change your nature of trusting people and I would be wrong in trying to do so, but I want you to ask for somebody's help when you are not sure what to do when it comes to needing service.

The Appliance Repair Act is needed in Michigan for several reasons and I'll give you the major ones. We as consumers have no place to go except small claims court when we get taken advantage of by an unethical service business. Small claims can be quite an experience for a homeowner who can't out-talk an appliance repair guy.

Everything else in this state is regulated to some degree, but the appliance repair business isn't at all.

Joe Gagnon can be heard on *Newstalk 760, WJR-AM*, every Saturday and Sunday mornings. His phone number is (313) 873-9789.

Home, garden show scheduled for April 5-8 at Novi Expo Center

The fifth annual spring home and garden show will run Thursday-Sunday, April 5-8, at the Novi Expo Center.

"This annual springtime tradition inspires many homeowners to beautify their homes and gardens," said Stephen Tagliana, president of Building Industry Association of Southeastern Michigan (BIA) and of Westminster & Abbey Homes in Bingham Farms.

"Our exhibitors will help homeowners to accentuate the positives in their home environments."

The non-profit BIA is the sponsor of the event.

Novi Expo Center is at I-96 and Novi Road. Show hours will be 2-10 p.m. Thursday-Friday, 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. Saturday and 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Sunday.

Admission is \$5 for adults, \$4 for seniors and ages 6-12, free for under age 6. Parking is available at Novi Expo Center for a fee.

For more information, visit www.builders.org or call (248) 862-1019.

Roger Swain, "the man with the red suspenders," as he is known to millions of viewers who have watched him for 16 years as the host of PBS's *The Victory Garden*, will share gardening insights at the Garden Theater.

Joining Swain will be Nancy Lindley, "Michigan's Rose Lady," who will educate homeowners on winter-hardy roses.

Additional show features will include demonstrations on decorating, home repair and remodeling, and a Treasure Chest contest with daily prizes.

The Garden Marketplace

will feature plants, trees, flowers, tools and yard accessories, including a garden auger for the end of your drill and a leaf bag holder.

Homeowners can bring bathroom pictures for the Original Ugliest Bathroom Contest, sponsored by Mathison Supply, WJR-760 AM and *The Observer & Eccentric Newspapers*.

Parade of Homes, sponsored by Standard Federal Bank, *The Detroit News* and *Free Press Classified Marketplace* and BIA, offers a free plan book featuring a pictorial display of 63 new homes.

Additional show features will include demonstrations on decorating, home repair and remodeling, and a Treasure Chest contest with daily prizes.

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To register, contact your local

Home Depot store.

April clinics include: How to Build a Deck, 10 a.m., Saturdays and Sundays; How to Install Pergo Flooring, 11 a.m., Saturdays and Sundays; How to Install Ceramic Tile, 2 p.m., Saturdays and Sundays; Retaining Walls and Pavers, 3 p.m., Saturdays and Sundays; Pressure

Washers and Paint Sprayers, 7 p.m., Tuesdays; and How to Install a Steel Door, 7 p.m., Thursdays.

May clinics include: Siding, 10 a.m., Sundays; Low Voltage Lighting Installation, 11 a.m., Sundays; Storm Door Installation, 7 p.m., Tuesdays; and Vinyl Window Replacement, 7 p.m.,

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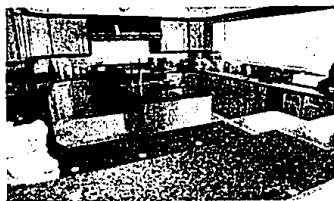
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