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Dealership Doc Fees Are Capped at \$85 in California, but That Could Rise to \$500

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Brooke K. Conkle | Christopher J. Capurso

Brooke Conkle and Chris Capurso, attorneys with Troutman Pepper Locke and co-hosts of *Moving the Metal: The Auto Finance Podcast*, were quoted in the July 3, 2025 *Automotive News* article, “[Dealership Doc Fees Are Capped at \\$85 in California, but That Could Rise to \\$500.](#)”

The stalled-out CARS Rule characterized document fees as “junk fees” that are unfair and often not properly disclosed, said Brooke Conkle, a partner at Troutman Pepper Locke. But SB 791, which was approved by the California Senate on June 3, is on to the California Assembly, the legislature’s lower house, for a vote with bipartisan support in one of the most consumer-friendly states in the country, Conkle said.

Conkle said state lawmakers are saying, “We are permitting dealers to charge an increased fee to keep up with the cost of doing business.”

“It really legitimizes the doc fee and cuts against this idea that it is just a junk fee that has no purpose,” she added.

Document fees vary widely across the U.S., in part because states regulate them differently. California’s current cap of \$85 is one of the lowest in the nation. Other states raise the cap on a schedule that keeps up with inflation, said Chris Capurso, an associate at Troutman Pepper Locke. Meanwhile, some states have no cap, and fees can be more than \$1,000.

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Meanwhile, state regulators elsewhere in the U.S. are looking to pick up where the CARS Rule left off now that it likely will not go into effect, Conkle said. The FTC might have put a target on document fees that states could use as a guide in the coming years.

“We also could see states really looking to more closely regulate how doc fees are disclosed to consumers,” Conkle said. “And how they are advertised with the price of vehicles.”

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