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# CHP Boss Criticized Over Loan of Car

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In a move that has prompted criticism in Sacramento, California Highway Patrol Commissioner Maurice J. Hanigan lent a new \$18,000 patrol car to an equipment supplier that used the car to exhibit its products at a police trade show in Missouri.

The black-and-white 1993 Ford Crown Victoria sedan, complete with CHP door decals and a California government license plate, was displayed prominently at the booth of Federal Signal Corp. at last week's convention of the International Association of Chiefs of Police in St. Louis.

Federal Signal has a contract to sell the CHP "lightbars," the multicolored light devices mounted on the roofs of patrol cars and seen by errant drivers who glance, usually too late, in their rearview mirrors. Federal Signal's new lightbar was on the roof of the CHP car on the convention hall floor.

The issue of the loaning CHP car is a political hot potato because many state officials say it is unseemly for government employees to do anything that might be construed as product endorsement. State law prohibits companies from using the CHP in any advertising or promotional efforts unless the highway patrol

has given permission. In this case, Hanigan authorized shipment of the car to Federal Signal's booth in St. Louis.

CHP spokesman Lieutenant Greg Manuel said, "The fact that the car is sitting there (at the Federal booth in St. Louis) doesn't mean it has been endorsed by the department. We don't endorse any product, and we don't consider this an endorsement."

But Assemblywoman Jackie Speler, D-South San Francisco, chairwoman of the Assembly Committee on Consumer Protection, Governmental Efficiency and Economic Development, said, "I think that kind of activity should be more than frowned up-

on. It was poor judgment on the part of Commissioner Hanigan."

Speler said she was contemplating legislation that would restrict state officials from becoming pitchmen or pitchwomen. "We may need to look at expanding that restriction to prevent any vendor from using the fact that they have a contract with the state of California as a promotion of their product," she added.

The annual International Association of Chiefs of Police convention is where many manufacturers and vendors of police equipment, such as sirens, lights, cars and motorcycles, set up

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booths to show chiefs, sheriffs and other law enforcement personnel the latest in police technology.

Hannigan, who attended the convention, is one of 14 members of the association's board of officers and is general chairman of its division of state and provincial police.

Two years ago, the Wilson administration harshly reprimanded Hannigan for "inappropriate behavior and a lapse of professional judgment" in the wake of a state investigation into reports that CHP brass intervened in the handling of traffic tickets involving Hannigan's daughter.

In the case at hand, other than paying \$18,572 for the car and its equipment, California taxpayers

were not on the hook for sending the car to St. Louis. It was trucked to Missouri at Federal Signal's expense. The firm also promised not to let anyone drive the car on the street and took out a \$25,000 insurance policy in case the car was lost or stolen.

The state did not receive any compensation for lending the car to the private Chicago-based firm.

Having a CHP car at a vendor's booth is important to manufacturers, knowledgeable law enforcement sources say, because the CHP is known worldwide for its exhaustive testing procedures. If the CHP has tested something and given its seal of approval, the thinking goes, many other departments, particularly those that cannot afford expensive testing programs, will fall in line and buy what the CHP bought.

The only other recent, quasi-commercial CHP connection is a television show that purports to tell true stories of incidents involving CHP officers. In that case, the CHP rents out its cars for 25 cents per mile.

The use of state property to help Federal Signal promote its lightbars, however, has raised eyebrows among key legislators and taxpayer watchdog groups.

Assemblyman Bob Campbell, the Richmond Democrat who chairs the Joint Legislative Audit Committee, said, "There's no question about it — a CHP car 2,000 miles away in another state — yes, it could be construed as an endorsement."

"There's a real troublesome aspect to this," said former Thousand Oaks Assemblyman Tom McClintock, leader of a taxpayers'

advocate group. "That car was available for service, and they kept it out of service to advertise somebody's lightbars at a convention. It's using the state of California to hawk wares, and it comes at a time

when taxpayers are being asked to cough up (more money) for law enforcement."

Federal Signal's Dick Gibb said he does not think that the incident was a promotion stunt for his company.

"It's very normal," Gibb said.

"One of the purposes of the LACP meeting is to see what is available in terms of technology, how equipment is configured. The best way for law enforcement officers to see all that equipment is in the installed mode."

Correspondent Joshua Peat in St. Louis contributed to this report.