

**Senate GOP memo reveals:**

# Foes of Big 3 auto loan bill schemed to bust union

WASHINGTON, D.C. (PAI) — An internal memorandum from GOP Senate staffers to their bosses shows the motive for Republican opposition to the \$14 billion “bridge loan” plan for two of the nation’s three domestic auto companies — GM and Chrysler — was not to target the firms, but to bash unions, specifically the United Auto Workers (UAW).

The “Action Alert — Auto Bail Out” memo, published by the online magazine MSNBC Countdown with Keith Olbermann, and also discussed in the Los Angeles Times, ratifies union President Ron Gettelfinger’s Dec. 12 statement about the Republicans’ motives, a day after the bridge loan bill failed to pass in the Senate because of a Republican-lead filibuster.

That Dec. 11 Senate vote left UAW and the two automakers dependent on the loan to tide them through into 2009, until the new Congress and the Obama Administration could evaluate the auto firms’ restructuring plans — and how many workers’ jobs would remain.

The memo was sent at 9:12 a.m., Dec. 10 to Senate Republicans, the day before the 52-35 vote that killed the bridge loans. Democrats needed 60 votes to cut off the GOP filibuster against the bridge loans. The names of the senders and recipients of the memo were blacked out in the copy Countdown obtained.

The memo calls defeating the auto firms’ bridge loans the GOP’s “first shot against organized labor.” The Senate GOP blocked the loans by demand-

ing UAW’s 150,000 members take immediate pay cuts of at least 50 percent to make their pay equal to that of nonunion foreign-owned “transplants,” auto plants in the South. The leaders of the opposition were Southern Republican Sens. Mitch McConnell (Kentucky), Richard Shelby (Ala.), Robert Corker (Tennessee) and Tom Coburn (Oklahoma).

The memo’s text:

**“From: Sent: Wednesday, December 10, 2008 9:12 AM**

**“To: Subject: Action Alert -- Auto Bailout**

*“Today at noon, Senators Ensign, Shelby, Coburn and DeMint will hold a press conference in the Senate Radio/TV Gallery. They would appreciate our support through messaging and attending the press conference, if possible. The message they want us to deliver is:*

*“1. This is the democrats’ first opportunity to payoff organized labor after the election. This is a precursor to card check and other items. Republicans should stand firm and take their first shot against organized labor, instead of taking their first blow from it.*

*“2. This rush to judgment is the same thing that happened with the TARP. Members did not have an opportunity to read or digest the legislation and therefore could not understand the consequences of it. We should not rush to pass this because Detroit says*

*the sky is falling.*

*“The sooner you can have press releases and documents like this in the hands of members and the press, the better. Please contact me if you need additional information. Again, the hardest thing for the democrats to do is get 60 votes. If we can hold the Republicans, we can beat this.”*

The reference to TARP is the official name for the \$700 billion bank bailout — the Troubled Assets Relief Program. The lower-casing of the “d” in Democrats and the word “payoff” were the memo’s own punctuation and word.

Of the 35 senators who voted to keep the Republican filibuster against the auto company bridge loans going

— thus killing the bill — 31 were Republicans. They included the other two mentioned in the memo: James DeMint (S.C.) and John Ensign (Nevada). Shelby, DeMint, Corker and McConnell, the minority leader, all have “transplant” car plants in their states.

Of the four Democrats opposing the bridge loans, Majority Leader Harry Reid (Nevada) had to switch his vote to opposition for parliamentary reasons. The other three foes were Sens. Max Baucus and Jon Tester (Montana) and Blanche Lincoln (Arkansas). Twelve senators — four Democrats and eight Republicans — did not vote. One Democratic-held seat, Barack Obama’s, was vacant at the time of the vote.

## IN MEMORIAM

**Vera Larson**, who for the past 25 years organized monthly outings for the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 48’s Retirees Club, passed away Dec. 14, just three weeks short of her 94th birthday.

Larson worked as a food server for a number of years, including at The Prime Rib Restaurant in Northeast Portland. She was a member of the Culinary Workers Union.

She was always part of the union family. Her first husband, Theodore Schleinig, was a glazier and member of Glass Workers Local 740. He died in 1966. She married John E. Larson, an electrician and member of Local 48, in 1967.

Larson also was an active member of Rose City Park United Methodist Church, the Portland Northeast Republican Women’s Club, Dolphin Yacht Club, and Northwest Outboard Trailer Sailors. She has held leadership roles in each of these organizations.

Vera Larson was born Jan. 4, 1915, in Bradley, South Dakota. Her family moved to the West when Vera was seven, stopping first in Seattle and moving five months later to Portland. She spent two years in Alaska, living in a camper with her first husband as he worked rebuilding Anchorage following a huge earthquake in 1964.

Larson is survived by three daughters, Marilyn Schultz of Lake Oswego; Shirleen Lawson of Portland, and Camille Schleinig of Delta Junction, Alaska; seven grandchildren, 10 great-grandchildren, and two great-great-grandchildren.

A memorial service is scheduled for 2 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 4 (her birthday), at Rose City Cemetery and Funeral Home, 5625 NE Fremont.

Remembrances can be sent to Rose City Park United Methodist Church.

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