

OPINION

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Help for America's Auto Industry

Auto jobs created a middle class



BY JUDGE GREG MATHIS

From maintenance to assembly

to sales, auto industry jobs have helped thousands of African Americans find decent, secure jobs that allowed them to support their families and plan for their futures.

With it's higher than aver-

age wages, the industry has long served as a gateway to the middle class for many African American workers. On shaky ground for years, the American auto industry is now under the threat of a total collapse. If it folds, black America will be hit

the hardest.

In the mid-1900s, millions of blacks living in the south headed north to cities like Detroit, lured by job prospects and a desire to escape the oppressive racism of the south. Though they didn't necessarily find utopia, they were able to

land jobs manufacturing jobs in rapidly growing industries.

Automakers were among the few companies that would hire blacks and many of those who moved north ended up in the auto plants. With these jobs, the workers were able to buy land, build

The government needs to increase the amount of the funds it is loaning to the auto industry. Without additional funds car makers will not be able to pay off debt and then begin the work of retooling their business models so that they can be more competitive with for-

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homes and provide an education for their children. Strong black communities were established and the black middle class began to grow.

Without long-term government support, the auto industry could crumble and the black middle class could shrink considerably. Already, our people are taking the biggest hits. Nearly 20,000 African American auto industry workers have lost their jobs since the recession began a little over a year ago.

In 2007, blacks made up just over 14 percent of auto industry workers. Today, we comprise about 11 percent of the industry's workforce.

Automakers were recently thrown a lifeline by the federal government in the form of a \$17.4 billion loan package. While the sum is huge, many industry insiders say it may not be enough to help the automakers dig themselves out of the financial hole they are in.

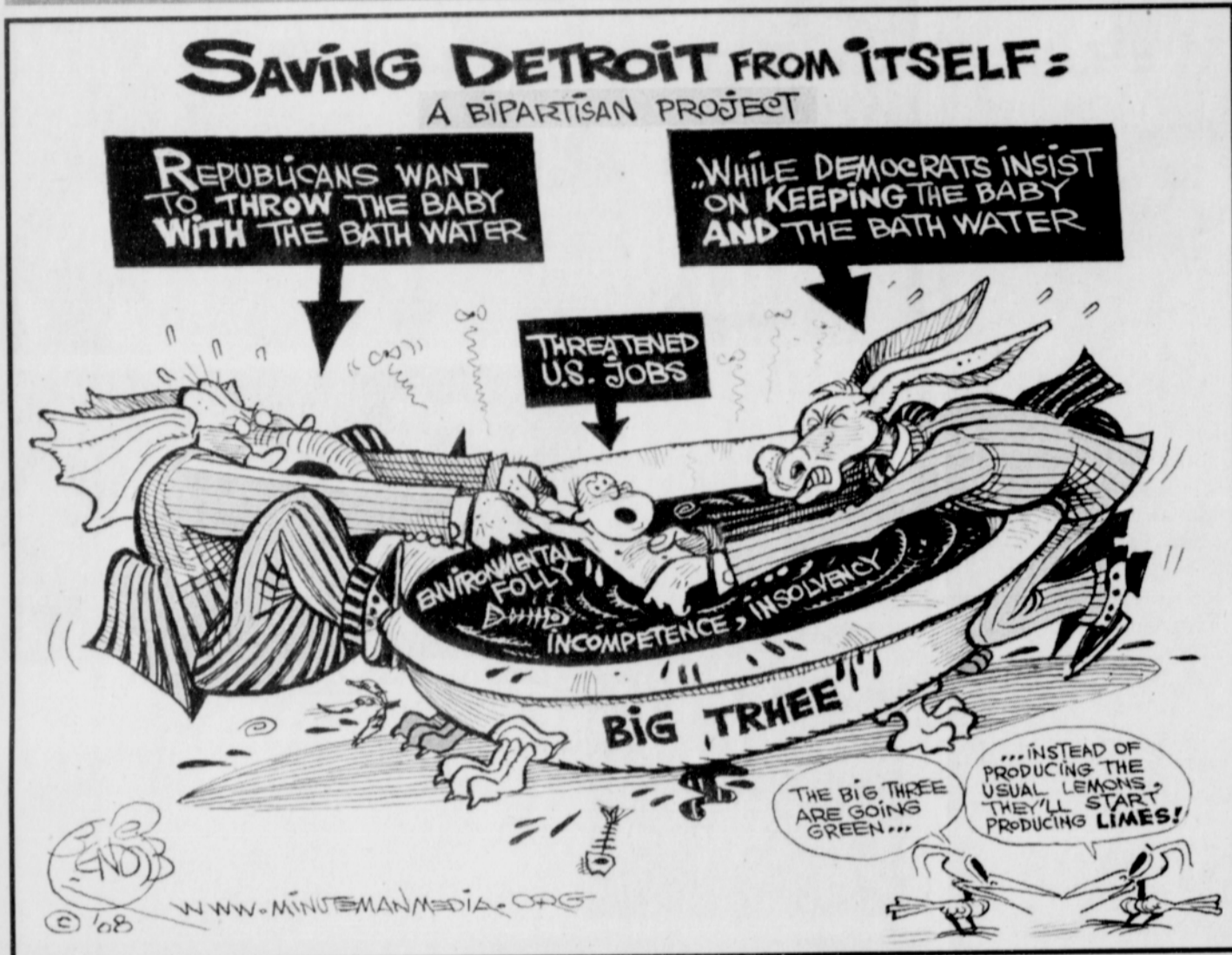
eign auto makers.

If more money is not made available, the leading American car makers would be forced into bankruptcy, taking with them the large and small companies that supply parts and other services to the industry. Millions of workers—and their families—would be left out in the cold.

Keeping these companies afloat is critical. Not only would the black middle class benefit, so too would the rest of America. If the large automakers go under, the already bleak economic outlook would only worsen.

We must collectively demand that our elected officials fight for additional support for the American auto industry. Write your representatives today; visit usa.gov to find out how.

Judge Greg Mathis is vice president of Rainbow PUSH and a board member of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.



Why should we give a Bailout?

BY CHAD KISTER

With the disgraced Detroit three automakers getting \$17.4 billion of our taxpayer dollars in loans, thanks to the disastrous George Bush, we should remember the last several billion that we gave the industry, and the outcome of it.

In the 1990s, the Partnership for a New Generation of Vehicles worked to make 80+ miles per gallon cars. Leading scientists and the big three automakers helped speed that process along.

The partnership was a huge success, with three 70+ miles per gallon prototypes. General Motors had the Precept, a 5-seat sedan with ample trunk

energy conservation perspective.

Using slick ads to push their behemoth vehicles, the auto makers are among the biggest culprits in the fast rise in greenhouse gas emissions in the Untied States.

What happened to the efficient vehicles? The failure to incorporate that technology was also a major cause of our economic collapse.

With the rise in gas prices this past summer, the values of SUV's plummeted, and for many, their gas guzzlers are now worth less than the loan they have on them.

Why should we give a bail-out now, when the automakers are the ones who put themselves into the crisis they are in through their own idiocy? Why don't they dust off these efficient vehicles and put them into production, something both our wallets and our planet could have used a decade ago?

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space, with one version getting 108 miles per gallon equivalent running on hydrogen.

Ford had the Prodigy getting 72 miles per gallon, and Daimler-Chrysler also had a 72-miles-per gallon vehicle. Taxpayers were proud that their billions were not wasted, and expected these vehicles on the market.

But none of the automakers put any of these vehicles into production, or anything similar. Instead, they chose gas-guzzling SUVs, the epitome of stupidity from a climate change and

They say those who forget history are bound to repeat it.

After the foolish follies of the auto industries, in pushing gas guzzlers on the American public (along with tax breaks that they manipulated through Congress), why should we bail them out?

What we need is massive investment in mass transit and high speed passenger rail: a much better way to travel with exponential fuel savings compared to the most efficient vehicles.

Chad Kister is an author and film producer.

The comfortable winning margin for Sen. Obama covered up more massive purging of eligible voters.

Suppressing the Vote to Win

Tide turns on Republicans

BY WILLIAM A. COLLINS

"We shall win." The old pol gloats, "As long as we control who votes."

In its present ideological mode, the Republican Party finds itself to be a serious minority. This weakness is especially pronounced among blacks, the fast-growing Latino bloc, and the poor in general.

Plainly in politics one's electoral future is not enhanced by being such a small portion of the electorate. Thus it is fortunate for Republicans that the United States enjoys a long history of restricting who actually gets to cast a ballot.

You'll recall that at first only property owners could do so, male property owners at that. After emancipation things opened up and black males were theoretically given the right to vote too. Women came along much later.

But as we all know, becoming and remaining a voter is not just a theoretical exercise. At least in

this country that right is hotly contested in hard-fought political combat.

He who controls the voter lists often controls the election. One thinks back to the poll tax, an early and effective device for Southern Democrats to deflect newly enfranchised blacks.

Now it is the Republicans' turn to fear voters. For years, even before this latest tour in the White House, the GOP's close bond with Wall Street had sapped the loyalty of many otherwise conservative average citizens.

The current financial meltdown then pushed many others over the edge to the Democrats. In fact, too many left for even this shrewd and conscienceless administration to be able to counteract the trend, though Lord knows it tried hard, in cooperation with various GOP-controlled state governments.

One clever maneuver to retain control was to underfund the Census Bureau, thus leading to an undercount in areas heavy with poor, hard-to-find citizens.

Many states with Republican legislatures or secretaries of state

set up stern roadblocks to voting.

Registration was made remarkably inconvenient; hard-to-obtain picture identification was made mandatory; voters who moved within a town were deleted from the rolls without notification; former felons were denied the vote (sometimes forever) until they completed an elaborate restoration process; voting machines broke down in poor neighborhoods; false information about voting was selectively distributed; non-profit groups aiding in voter registration were investigated by the FBI.

The comfortable winning margin for Sen. Obama covered up more massive purging of eligible voters. Perhaps a new Justice Department will alter course and seek out purgers rather than continuing to harass voter registration teams.

Without a universal registration system, however, the term democracy will always be somewhat misapplied to the United States.

Columnist William A. Collins is a former state representative and a former mayor of Norwalk, Conn.

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