

REID TO MCCONNELL: DON'T BE A SCROOGE! PASS AUTO STIMULUS

There has been a lot of reporting that an auto bailout is unlikely. While I think that's probably true, I also wonder whether Chris Dodd's claim that the votes aren't there is based exclusively on discussions with Richard Shelby.

Dodd was listening, and in televised remarks later he appeared to dash any hopes of action until the new Obama administration is in place and Democrats have more Senate votes next years.

"Right now, I don't think there are the votes...Dodd said. "You've heard Senator Shelby publicly speak out about his opposition to doing anything in the automotive area. So I want to be careful about bringing up a proposition that might fail in light of the fact the authority exists and under an Obama Administration there seems to be a greater willingness to deal with the issue."

As I've pointed out, Shelby would love for the Big Three to fail so Japanese and Korean and German manufacturers can continue to make big gas guzzlers in his state, only without any competition from domestic manufacturers.

That said, Harry Reid has noticed something I did too: like Shelby, Mitch McConnell's got some Japanese manufacturers in his state (though those factories produce more of the efficient cars in Kentucky—like the Camry—that every one thinks of Japanese manufacturers making). In addition, McConnell's state is also home to some Ford and GM plants, including some key Ford truck plants. Those Ford plants, incidentally, are going to be idling through the entire

Christmas season.

The United Auto Workers union says Ford's Louisville Assembly Plant will be idled for five weeks beginning the first of next month.

Also, The Courier-Journal reports that UAW Local 862 says the Kentucky Truck Plant will apparently shut down in mid-December until early February.

I would imagine, with thousands of his constituents out of work, Mitch McConnell is going to be hesitant to take a strong stand against bailing out those constituents.

Which is probably what Harry Reid is thinking, as he plans to push for unemployment and an auto bailout in the lame duck session.

Unless I hear from you to the contrary, I plan to press forward with two provisions of that package – an extension of unemployment benefits, which passed the House by a bipartisan vote of 368-28 and legislation to protect the millions of workers at risk from the possible collapse of our domestic auto industry. These two provisions both address especially urgent needs and seem most likely to win your support and the support of your caucus.

Like I said, the odds of passing an auto bailout during the lame duck session are still slim. But that reality is going to put the Minority Leader in a difficult spot.