

# THREE AUTO STATE SENATORS “SAID IN A STATEMENT”

For an example of just how crappy the reporting on a potential auto bridge is, check out this NYT article. Its title announces "Republicans Divided on Aid to Automakers." Yet the part of the article that purportedly tells that story consists solely of statements of the four most invested Republican Senators on the issue.

Kit Bond (who co-sponsored past efforts with Carl Levin):

“I’m glad the Democratic leadership has embraced the principles of the Bond-Levin bill to hold auto companies accountable, protect taxpayers and save millions of American jobs as we head into the holiday season,” Mr. Bond said in a statement.

Bob Corker:

“Based on the outline we’ve seen so far, we are disappointed,” Mr. Corker said in a statement. He reiterated his demands that the automakers make aggressive efforts to cut labor costs and reduce their overall debt obligations before receiving any aid.

“These are the same types of conditions a bankruptcy judge might require to ensure that these companies become viable and sustainable into the future,” Mr. Corker said. “And if they will agree to these terms, then we have something to talk about.”

Mitch McConnell:

“I look forward to reviewing the legislation being drafted to address the

difficulties in our auto markets,” Mr. McConnell said in a statement. “As we consider this legislation, our first priority must be to protect the hard-earned money of the American taxpayer.”

And a gratuitous inclusion of Richard Shelby, though he apparently hasn't issued any new statement, but somehow gets included, based on no apparently new reporting:

The senior Republican on the banking committee, Senator Richard C. Shelby of Alabama, has said he will oppose any taxpayer-financed bailout for the auto industry, and other fiscal hawks are likely to join him in opposing the measure.

This is what counts as reporting these days for the NYT. Three official statements probably gleaned from press releases, thereby letting those most invested in this debate stand in for those who will determine its outcome.

In spite of the fact that every single Republican listed (along with Carl Levin) is an auto state Senator of one sort or another, David Herszenhorn doesn't apparently consider that information to be noteworthy (indeed, he attributes Shelby's opposition to any bailout to fiscal conservatism, not anti-union ideology and home state self-interest). And, more importantly, Herszenhorn reports that as the entire state of the debate: one American manufacturer state Senator sponsoring legislation, two foreign manufacturer state Senators opposing it, a fourth who lives in a mixed auto manufacturer state taking a middle ground. This, in spite of the fact that the legislation will be decided (first) by whether McConnell invests his leadership to make this happen, and more importantly, by whether the remaining 44 Republican Senators—most of whom don't have significant manufacturing facilities in their state—stage a filibuster (and, for that

matter, whether Dodd gets Democratic skeptics like Jon Tester on board).

The only real discussion of the state of what a Senate vote would involve is the observation that Obama has already resigned, and that it "is also unlikely" that Biden and Hillary would vote. Though apparently, the NYT's reporter didn't even bother to contact New York's own junior Senator about that assertion, since her spokesperson has stated clearly that she would vote.

Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton, the soon-to-be secretary of state, is expected to be on the Senate floor next week and intends to cast votes if they are called, her spokesman Philippe Reines said today.

Clinton had always planned on being in Washington for the lame duck session and she hasn't changed those plans, Reines said. [my emphasis]

Maybe Reines didn't issue a formal statement, because that seems to be the only thing Herszenhorn consulted for this story.

Hey Herszenhorn! You want to do some actual reporting on this? You might want to talk to Bob Bennett and Liddy Dole, both Banking Committee members and both fairly engaged—as mostly uninterested participants—in this debate; Bennett, in particular, has said some nuanced things about a bailout. You might want to talk to Arlen Specter, who has supported a bailout even though his state has much less invested in this than the four Senators cited. You might want to talk to Senators Collins, Snowe, Coleman, Lugar, Murkowski, Martinez, and Smith—are those Senators divided (and are they voting)? Because they're the ones that matter at this point, not Bond or Shelby or Corker.

Thus far you have written a story that should be titled, "Auto State Senators Represent the Interests of Their States." You might want to

find out what other Senators think, before you  
let the auto state Senators (including Levin and  
Bond) stand in for the rest of their colleagues.