

DEAR DNC: AUTOMOTIVE “I TOLD YOU SOS” NEED TO BE DIRECTED DOWN- TICKET, TOO

The DNC and Midwestern state Democratic Parties are rolling out an extravaganza today, using the occasion of Chrysler paying back some of its federal loans to mock GOP presidential candidates for opposing the auto bailout.

The DNC had a press conference with Jennifer Granholm, Ted Strickland, and Bob King to mock people like Mitt, T-Paw, Gingrich, and Huntsman. “Many of these naysayers now want to be President,” Strickland said.

MI posted a release (though apparently didn't care enough send it to members):

Chrysler is reportedly set to announce that it will repay \$5.9 billion in loans to the U.S. government and American taxpayers. Chrysler's good news comes on the heels of a report that Chrysler made its first quarterly profit since emerging from structured bankruptcy reorganization. Chrysler posted a 22.5% increase of sales in April compared to the same month last year and first quarter net income of \$116 million, marking a remarkable turnaround for Chrysler and the domestic auto industry. “This is a great sign for Chrysler communities across the state and another positive sign of the recovery of manufacturing here in Michigan,” said Michigan Democratic Party Chair Mark Brewer. “Though it was unpopular in many parts of the country, President Obama and Democrats did what was needed to save the more than 1.4 million jobs that the American auto industry supports. If the President

hadn't acted to prevent Chrysler and GM from shutting their doors permanently, the entire state could have seen further economic disaster."

After receiving loan packages and emerging from structured bankruptcy reorganization, Chrysler and General Motors are both hiring again and operating at a profit. Right here in Michigan, more than 12,100 manufacturing and auto dealer jobs have been created in the last year.

IN posted a release and sent it to DFH journalists from adjoining states:

In response to today's news that Chrysler has repaid \$5.9 billion in loans to the U.S. government and American taxpayers, Indiana Democratic Party Chair lauded President Obama for his strong economic leadership and success taking action to prevent the collapse of America's domestic auto industry. Parker also said Indiana Republicans who voted against or publicly opposed Obama's auto plan now find themselves on the wrong side of history.

"Indiana's auto industry was hard hit by the recent economic crisis, and this is a great sign both for Chrysler and Hoosier workers," Parker said.

"President Obama's plan wasn't popular in many parts of the country, but Democrats did what was necessary to save the more than 1.4 million jobs that the American auto industry supports. Without that kind of strong leadership, many of our communities would have suffered economic disaster."

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Parker noted that Indiana Gov. Mitch Daniels and U.S. Rep Mike Pence, who is seeking the Republican gubernatorial nomination, both opposed the President's auto plan.

(I haven't seen one from OH yet, but they sent this wonderfully catty release earlier this month.)

Update: Here's Obama's statement (which lacks any "I told you sos"):

Chrysler's repayment of its outstanding loans to the U.S. Treasury and American taxpayers marks a significant milestone for the turnaround of Chrysler and the countless communities and families who rely on the American auto industry. This announcement comes six years ahead of schedule and just two years after emerging from bankruptcy, allowing Chrysler to build on its progress and continue to grow as the economy recovers. Supporting the American auto industry required making some tough decisions, but I was not willing to walk away from the workers at Chrysler and the communities that rely on this iconic American company. I said if Chrysler and all its stakeholders were willing to take the difficult steps necessary to become more competitive, America would

stand by them, and we did. While there is more work to be done, we are starting to see stronger sales, additional shifts at plants and signs of strength in the auto industry and our economy, a true testament to the resolve and determination of American workers across the nation.

But there's something missing, perhaps because the DNC is too focused on national races and doesn't appear to know much about the local industry. The DNC is focused on the GM and Chrysler headlines, not so much the suppliers, where the bulk of the jobs are. More importantly, the Democrats as a whole don't seem to be cataloging the many examples where down-ticket Republicans are claiming credit for government investments in new technology that are just now paying off in jobs.

The problem is particularly acute here in W MI, home of some of the GOP's biggest evangelists claiming business simply needs government to get out of the way. But it's also home to a good number of factories—including, increasingly, clean energy factories supported by Granholm credits and federal stimulus dollars—that rely on government funding.

As Wizardkitten ranted wonderfully earlier this month, GOPers routinely show up to claim credit for these plants, even while ignoring that Democratic investments rather than GOP austerity made the plants possible.

Governor Snyder, who spent a campaign trash-talking both the state economic development team and the tax credits that are now growing a clean energy economy here in Michigan, not only used an advanced battery plant created with state incentives and stimulus money to introduce the Republican ticket last August, now has given his "Reinventing Michigan" award to another Governor Granholm/MEDC/Recovery Act success story

– and tries to play it off as a victory surrounding his political talking points.

[snip]

Pete Hoekstra also tried to turn Energetx into a political football during his failed 2010 gubernatorial campaign, at the time holding a press conference to both celebrate the jobs and denounce the credits that brought them here – a move that forced CEO Slikkers to defend the company and the state economic development team. Awkward.

Now, Snyder has given them a shiny award, and uses the occasion to push his simplistic trickle-down plan that probably would have had the company looking at Indiana or some other state for incentives in the first place. The hubris is amazing.

Both at a national and a regional level, it seems to me, these are the jobs the DNC ought to be bragging about. Nationally, few people understand how stimulus dollars invested in new technology that should help the Big 2.5 compete in the near future. I hear a lot of people badmouthing the auto bailout because they don't understand how significant a shift GM, at least, has made on efficiency; but this cool new tech ought to make folks on the coasts happier about the money spent.

And pointing to these factories at a regional level would highlight the good, new news. Michiganders, for one, are acutely aware that MI needed new technology, and Granholm worked her ass off to attract it. That effort is just now coming to fruition.

More importantly, we're waging an ideological battle here in the Midwest, as a bunch of GOP hacks try to restructure the Midwest with policies that will strip the region of the

things we do well (in many cases, like educating our children). The national party might like to keep it a secret that government investment actually works, particularly in new industries. But if it keeps that story a secret, we're going to lose the ideological battle for the Midwest.