Detroit's long contribution to global economic growth

From Detroit Mayor Ken Cockrel Jr.

Since the creation of the automobile, Detroiters have played an integral role in moving manufacturing forward. Progress in the auto industry has led to new industries, new technologies and more jobs not just in Detroit but also in communities across the globe. As mayor of Detroit, I fight to protect not only the people who elected me, but also jobs, innovation and ingenuity all over the world.

And should members of Congress vote against giving the auto industry a federal bridge loan (not a blank-check bailout), they will be supporting incalculable job loss, small-business recession rather than growth, and the stifling of advanced manufacturing, green technologies and the future of innovation. They will be voting against the auto dealers, auto repairmen, suppliers, parts makers, tool and die makers, painters and others that the auto industry supports. They will be voting against the museums and cultural institutions that are supported by GM, Chrysler and Ford. They are voting against Major League Baseball, the National Basketball Association, National Football League, NASCAR and other professional sports, for which the American automakers provide a great deal of sponsorship revenue.

Like most Americans, I share a frustration with the current state of corporate America, but I caution against making one industry a scapegoat. This industry has too much of an economic impact on the nation and around the world to ignore. Congress is not the only legislative body to have this issue before them. Nations all over the world are providing support for the auto industry. Yet here, in America, Detroit faces its toughest critics, and its most stringent competition from our own brothers and sisters.

For Southern lawmakers, this is not a vote in support of or against the domestic industry over the foreign automakers. It is a vote about working together to help our nation's economy. In fact, Honda, Hyundai, Toyota, Nissan and others are in support of legislative efforts to help Chrysler, GM and Ford, as are the suppliers that recently moved to your community. And if the Big Three do not receive federal support for the loans, I believe that all the hard work you put into attracting the other automakers and their suppliers into your hometown will go to waste, as they too will start cutting shifts or stopping production altogether. In fact, the same suppliers that relocated to your community are still headquartered in mine. They supply all the automakers — not just yours. What is in Detroit's economic interests are also in yours. So let's work together and not against each other.

The U.S. automakers and all those who rely on them need your help and the help of Congress, President Bush and President-elect Obama. Just as they have come to the aid of other industries, in this time of great need, we need their support. And we need their help fast or we will all suffer the consequences.

Detroit