

# SENATE DEMOCRATIC CAUCUS COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE

# Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
May 27, 2009

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## **DETROIT SENATORS REJECT REPUBLICAN ULTIMATUM ON COBO BILLS**

*Legislation Recycles Previously Refused Proposal on Cobo, Threatens to Move Auto Show Out of the Motor City*

LANSING-Detroit members of the Senate Democratic Caucus voted against legislation today that was introduced by Senate Republicans that proposes the same regional authority for the management of Cobo Hall that the Detroit City Council rejected in December. The legislation, which passed on a Republican party line vote, also includes a provision that would move the North American International Auto Show to Novi if the city council doesn't accept the agreement the second time around.

"The North American International Auto Show is a staple of Detroit and to lose it because of bills that give the Detroit City Council such an ultimatum would be a huge loss for our citizens and the city as a whole," said Senator Buzz Thomas (D-Detroit). "I would hope that the Senate would stop micromanaging the affairs of the region and let local leaders and Mayor Bing reach their agreements."

"In these challenging financial times, legislators need not pit one part of our state against the other," said Sen. Irma Clark-Coleman (D-Detroit). "We should allow for Detroit's newly elected Mayor Dave Bing to negotiate a deal that is in the best interest for his city and Southeast Michigan. Mayor Bing has indicated that he is in talks with all the stakeholders involved, which include Wayne, Oakland and Macomb County officials, Governor Granholm and the Detroit City Council. I firmly believe he can do it."

Lawmakers also argued against the proposal because it would essentially be funneling taxpayer dollars to potentially support a private company, and that Novi and other proposed auto show locations outside of Detroit also lack the infrastructure necessary to accommodate large-scale activities. The City of Detroit has the casinos, hotels, restaurants and transportation system that draws and supports not only the auto show, but also other major events like the Major League Baseball All-Star Game, the Super Bowl and the Final Four.

"The auto show gives us a chance to showcase to thousands of people throughout the world that Detroit is the home of the auto industry and to lose this would be devastating to our city," said Senator Martha G. Scott (D-Highland Park). "Instead of forcing the Detroit City Council to accept a plan they have already rejected for the Cobo Center, we need to work with them in order to keep the auto show in Detroit instead of moving out

of the city or even the state.”

“I spoke with Detroit City Council members and asked what they needed, and their answer was precisely what we are advocating today,” said Sen. Hansen Clarke (D-Detroit). “The auto show is a big part of Detroit’s brand identity, and we need to work together as legislators with the new mayor and City Council to keep jobs in the city and the auto show in Detroit where it belongs.”

In December 2008, the House and Senate reached a bipartisan, bicameral agreement that would establish a regional authority to manage Cobo Center with representatives from the City of Detroit, Wayne County, Macomb County and Oakland County along with a gubernatorial appointee. The agreement as passed by the Legislature and signed by Governor Granholm included a provision that allowed the Detroit City Council to veto the proposal, which they did. Senate Republicans are attempting to pass the same legislation that was already turned down, only now they’re trying to coerce and extort the city council by threatening to move the auto show out of Detroit if they don’t agree to the proposal. No legislators from Detroit were consulted in the development of this revised plan.

“In order to retain the auto show in Detroit there needs to be input from the Detroit delegation as well as cooperation and negotiation throughout the region, none of which occurred when these bills were drafted,” said Senator Tupac A. Hunter (D-Detroit). “The annual auto show has been a part of Detroit for over a century and it’s essential that we work cooperatively with all the region’s leaders and stakeholders to improve and expand Cobo Center so that we can retain the North American International Auto Show.”

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