

# Detroit to D.C.

A history of the Detroit Three Bridge Loans



A close-up photograph of the front left corner of a red car. The image shows the headlight assembly, which includes a large circular main lamp and three smaller auxiliary lamps. Below the headlight is a chrome grille with a mesh pattern. The car's body is a vibrant red color.

## Case Study

Providing a Voice for Businesses of All Sizes;  
Advocating for the Detroit Three March 11 2009

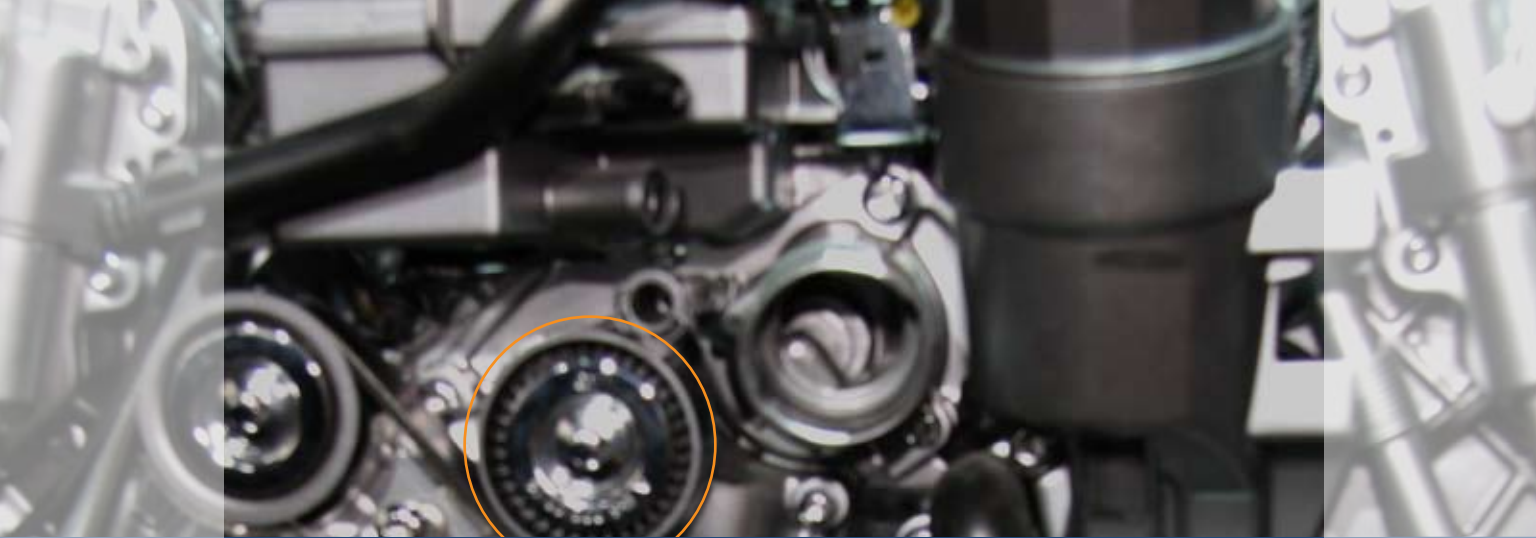
### Purpose

With bankruptcy threatening the Detroit Three, Chrysler, Ford, General Motors and the UAW went to Washington D.C. to request \$25 billion in advance loans to avoid bankruptcy before the end of the year. This funding would help maintain the automakers' solvency until they restructure in line with newly bargained contracts with the UAW and access the loans that were approved to modernize facilities and improve technology toward better fuel efficiency. Congress faced a challenging decision on whether or not to provide GM and Chrysler these advance loans to help the companies stabilize.

Southeast Michigan has already been hit hard by job loss and the effects of the down turn in our national economy. Losing one or more of the Detroit Three to bankruptcy would have devastated the region, causing thousands of direct job losses and potentially millions when automotive suppliers and other businesses related to automotive manufacturing that depend on auto worker spending are factored into the equation.

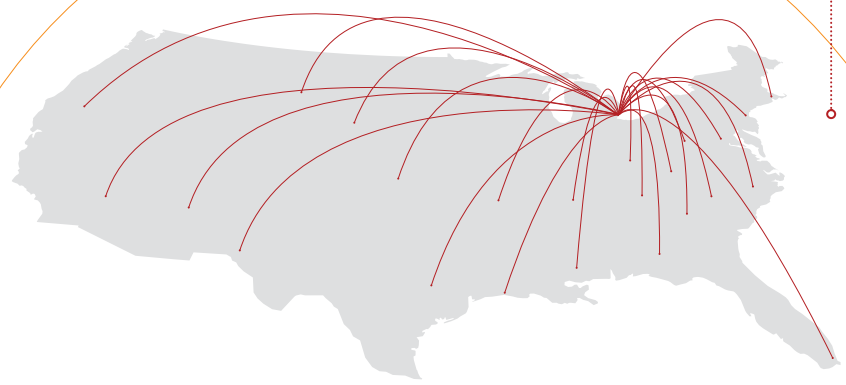
In an effort to gain support for the automotive industry, the chamber sought to leverage the power of its members by engaging them in a viral marketing campaign designed to elicit thousands of emails sent to both local and federal legislators urging them to support passing the loans for the automotive industry.

President Bush's administration eventually agreed to a commitment for **\$17.4 billion** in emergency loans for General Motors and Chrysler. The chamber's efforts were integral in helping the loans get approved as the chamber's advocacy efforts resulted in members and professionals from 43 states sending nearly 24,000 messages to key members of congress and the Bush administration urging them to act now.



### Goals

- Engage as many people as possible - particularly those living outside of Michigan - to use the Vote4Biz Action Center to send emails to President Bush, Secretary Paulsen and Chairman Bernanke and urge them to enact the automotive loan legislation.
- Drive web traffic to the Vote4Biz blog on Detroitchamber.com and the articles posted on Detroit Online.
- Secure media coverage while advocating for the auto loans and communicating how the chamber is a partner for businesses during tough economic times.



### Description

The viral campaign was split into two phases. Phase one, which focused on soliciting support for the automotive loans, began on November 19, 2008 and lasted until December 12, 2008, urging congress to pass the auto loan legislation.

The second phase of the campaign took place from December 12, 2008 until December 23, 2008 and targeted President Bush, Secretary Paulsen and Chairman Bernanke after congress failed to pass the initial loan legislation.

The call to action for chamber members is simple and straight forward – engage with the chamber to send e-communication to congress and the Bush administration that makes them aware that the health of U.S. automotive manufacturing isn't just a Michigan problem, it affects the entire country.

**Challenge** Make legislative leaders from across the country understand the importance and value of the U.S. automotive industry to the country's economy. Losing the Detroit Three would do more than just devastate Michigan; it would cripple the entire country.



## Executed Marketing Tactics

To carry out the Vote4Biz Auto Loan Campaign, a blend of various web vehicles were used, including: email blasts, blog postings, LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter feeds, writing articles for Detroit Online and utilizing the eDetroit newsletter. Our email blasts were targeted to our member base of over 20,000 member businesses that employ over three quarters of a million workers.

The mass email communications were followed up with specific updates via the eDetroit, Facebook and LinkedIn, using Tweets to the chamber's followers on Twitter, publishing content written by our government relations team on Detroit Online and posting various articles found in mainstream media and updates from Washington on the Vote4Biz blog; providing many different avenues of information for our audience.

One of the strengths of this campaign was its viral nature. Members forwarded our e-communications to friends and family across the country, extending our reach to over 5,000 more individuals, who may have passed the message on even further. There is no specific data available on how far the final reach was but that is the true value of viral communications, they spread beyond what is measurable.



## Media Coverage and Advertising

### Advertising

The chamber contributed a donation to [AmericanAutoIndustryRocks.com](http://AmericanAutoIndustryRocks.com) to purchase advertising in key southern states where the legislators were opposed to the auto loans. The purpose of these ads was to urge citizens to contact their legislators and tell them to reconsider their position on the loans. There is no information available on how many ads were purchased, the exact markets they ran in or their effectiveness.

### Media Coverage

## Detroit Free Press



- Wrote three opinion editorials (one placed in USA Today, two placed in Detroit Free Press)
- Participated at two press conferences (one with Wayne County Executive Robert Ficano, one with Gov. Jennifer Granholm)
- Issued five press releases/statements supporting the auto industry loan legislation
- Drafted a template letter to the editor to be used by nationwide Automotive Jobs Action Coalition members
- Conducted 12 media interviews
- Five with national/international reporters
- Earned nearly 500 placements in print and online media.

## Key Messages

Helping the American automotive industry survive is a national economic imperative, not just a Michigan issue, because there are auto-related jobs in every state in the union.

The nation's automotive companies and suppliers support over 13 million auto-related jobs across the country.

The Center for Automotive Research (CAR) reports that about 2.5 million jobs across the economy would disappear in the first year if the U.S. auto industry shrinks by 50 percent.

Preserving a strong manufacturing base in the U.S. is not only critical for our economy, it is also a national security issue. American manufacturing was the "arsenal of democracy" in the last century. The industry, led by the domestic auto companies, remains a central part of the nation's ability to protect itself and its interests in an uncertain world today.

The quickest way to help the American autos is to provide for bridge loans, either from the \$25 billion already appropriated or from the \$700 billion TARP funding.

The chart below illustrates the spike in media coverage the chamber received during the auto loan crisis communication efforts. The chart illustrates the number of articles placed and the audience reached between July 1, 2008 and December 23, 2008. The high-point of the chamber's media coverage came when news of the automakers seeking loans broke in mid-September 2008.



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## Results/Summary

The Vote4Biz Auto Loan Campaign was successful in achieving all four goals. The advance loans were passed, the Vote4Biz Action Center was heavily utilized, site traffic on Detroitchamber.com and Detroit Online hit highs and the chamber was successful in earning nearly 500 placements in print and online media. Below are specific results of the campaign.

### Email Communication

During the course of the campaign, 13 targeted emails were sent to various chamber partners and various segments of our chamber members.

**Estimated email audience: 22,000**

Average open rate of unique subscribers: 20.54 percent

Average click-thru rate of unique subscribers: 13.77 percent

Total times subscribers forwarded emails to others: 7,268

5,640 of the forwards were sent after the December 12, 2008 email that urged people to contact President Bush and his administration to approve the advance loan legislation after it was vetoed by congress.

**eDetroit**



eDetroit circulation: 6,000

November 25, 2008 – 18 percent unique open rate, 41 people clicked on Vote4Biz Action Center

December 2, 2008 – 18 percent unique open rate, 29 clicks on Vote4Biz Action Center, eight on Americanautoindustryrocks.com, five on Vote4Biz blog

December 9, 2008 – 19 percent unique open rate, 19 clicks on Vote4Biz blog and 14 Vote4Biz tell a friend link

December 16, 2008 – 20 percent unique open rate, eight clicks on Vote4Biz Action Center and four on the article about South Carolina's Senator

**Detroit Online**



An article entitled Senate Fails to Act on Big Three Loan was posted and asked direct questions of users and encouraged them to visit Vote4Biz.com and use the action center. It also contained links to the Vote4Biz blog and the chamber's Web site. The article received 17 comments between December 12, 2008 and December 15, 2008. During the week after it was posted, it was the 7th most viewed page with users staying on the page an average of

1:52. The site-wide average is 39 seconds. Traffic to Detroit Online in was greater than either of the days the eDetroit was sent out in December. The eDetroit typically causes the high-point in web traffic to Detroit Online each week.

Not surprisingly, November and December had more web traffic than any other month in 2008. In November, Detroit Online had 8,040 unique visitors and 5,635 in November. The high point in traffic occurred on Dec. 12 when Detroit Online had 671 unique visitors to the site. This was also the day the all-member email urging President Bush to enact the auto loan legislation was sent.

**Detroitchamber.com**



The chamber's Web site traffic patterns during the campaign were largely influenced by the distribution of the email communications, with the highest traffic day coming on December 12, 2008 when the action alert to email President Bush was sent. On this day alone, Detroitchamber.com had 4,985 visitors and 28,982 page views. This is almost triple the number of visitors on the next highest day (December 13, 2008; 1,521 visitors) and about 7,000 more page views than the second highest day (December 9, 2008; 21,982 page views). During December, the chamber's

Web site received 9,349 unique visitors, 12,869 visits and 172,367 page views.

To compare, Detroitchamber.com received 14,588 visits and 57,293 page views in November. The Vote4Biz portion of Detroitchamber.com received 166 visits and 247 page views.

**Facebook**



The Detroit Regional Chamber has its own networking group on Facebook that has 271 members who are friends of the chamber. During the auto loan campaign, the chamber sent out two messages to this group communicating the advocacy efforts being made and links to all of the applicable content on Vote4Biz.com. Links were also posted in other groups the chamber is a member of such as: Support Detroit: Buy American Cars (693), Believers in the American Auto Industry (47) and Support the Auto Industry (830). The chamber was also engaged in a discussion on "should we save Detroit?" in Believers in the American Auto Industry group.

The chamber's efforts on Facebook resulted in reaching an audience of 1,841 social networkers who are involved in the same groups as the chamber. In addition, there is a strong likelihood that the audience reach could be much higher when page views

by non-members of the chamber's groups are factored in. This data is currently untraceable.

**LinkedIn**



The chamber's staff started discussions in three groups: Motor City Connect (1,615 members), Birmingham Bloomfield Chamber (29), and Automation Alley (233). All of the discussions included links to Vote4Biz are ongoing. The chamber's efforts on LinkedIn reached an audience of 427 social networkers. Again, the audience reach has a high likelihood of being much higher when non-member page views are factored in.

**Twitter**



Three internal staff members – Bradley Williams, Sarah Hubbard and Laura Farms – tweeted to a combined total of 263 followers. These tweets were re-tweeted and links were independently tweeted by four people outside of the chamber to 557 followers. The combined audience reach was 820 Twitter users.

**Vote4Biz Action Center**



During the course of the campaign, three different action alerts were set up for people to send automated emails to their respective legislative leaders. Below is the

messaging report. During the campaign, users from 43 out of the 50 states in the U.S. (and also the District of Columbia) sent advocacy messages to congress. Links to the action center were provided in all of the tactics described in this report.



## Results/Summary

Alert Title	Date Created	Activists	Messages Sent
Please Mr. President Save Our Jobs	12/12/08	6,588	13,557
Take Action: The Auto Crisis Effects Everyone	11/26/08	1,001	3,965
Support a Bridge Loan for the Auto Industry	11/18/08	1,654	6,776
<b>Totals</b>		<b>9,243</b>	<b>24,298</b>

\*There are 322 people not reflected in the graph because they elected to print and mail letters instead of sending via email.

## Conclusion

The Vote4Biz Auto Loan Campaign was a successful marketing effort for the chamber because it not only achieved the four goals of the campaign centered around raising awareness, building traffic, and media reach, but it was also a big win for the region in securing advance loans for GM and Chrysler and the perception of the chamber's advocacy efforts.

No other business organization in the area is able to influence the actions of congress as much as the Detroit Regional Chamber. The chamber advocates on behalf of over 20,000 businesses and was able to create roughly 24,500 unique messages sent to congress from professionals all over the country. This is an excellent example of how the chamber's advocacy efforts provide every business – regardless of size – the chance to be heard and make a difference on legislative issues on the local, state and federal levels.





**About us** With over 20,000 members, the Detroit Regional Chamber is the largest chamber of commerce in the country. The chamber's mission to power the economy for Southeast Michigan is carried out through workforce/talent retention, economic development and public policy efforts.