

By Rep. Steve King

In 1924, the first Chrysler automobile hit the road. This sleek six cylinder car led to the Chrysler Corporation's formation a year later. In the 84 years that followed, Chrysler developed into a classic example of America's boundless opportunities.

This small company rose to become one of the most important businesses and largest employers in America. At one time, Chrysler was the second largest auto manufacturer in the United States.

Chrysler was influential in the development and growth of vehicles familiar to all of us, including the minivan and the Dodge and Jeep brands. Through good times and bad, millions of Americans purchased Chrysler cars and trucks for their families.

We live in a day and age where entrepreneurial success stories like Chrysler's are occurring less and less often. Instead, we're seeing the opposite. Companies are failing and begging the federal government for assistance. The lines between the public and private sector are increasingly blurry, and some industries have even been partially nationalized by the federal government.

Sadly, Chrysler is now an example of what happens when the government starts running private companies. Chrysler's recent struggles and acceptance of federal bailout money resulted in the federal government becoming Chrysler's de facto CEO.

But the government's bureaucracy and billions of taxpayer dollars could not save Chrysler. The government intervened in an unprecedented way to bail Chrysler out, but the famed company still had to file for bankruptcy. Soon 789 Chrysler dealerships will close across the country, including 22 in Iowa.

Car dealers, parts manufacturers and repair shops across America will feel the ripple effects of these closings. It is very likely that many small businesses tied in to these dealerships will have to close their doors due to a loss of business.

The media focuses most of its attention of large companies like Chrysler, General Motors and the banking industry. Often overlooked are the smaller but growing businesses that are the backbone of the American economy. In Iowa, small businesses comprise ninety-seven percent of our state's total business.

Nationally, small businesses provide 51% of our employment and 45% of the payroll American workers receive. According to the Congressional Research Service, small businesses create 7 of 10 of the new jobs in America and produce 50% of our private, non-farm GDP.

While it is important that our biggest businesses – like Chrysler of today - are successful, it is equally important that our small businesses – like the young Chrysler of the 1920's - are innovating, growing and expanding. We need our entrepreneurs and small business owners to create the products and services demanded by the international market in order to keep America a strong and prosperous country. These products can be created as long as the government does not interfere.

Some in Congress are currently proposing new tax hikes and energy fees that would affect small business owners across America. High taxes and new regulations will punish our job creators and delay economic recovery. Our economy thrives when we enact sound policies that get government out of the way to help small businesses create new jobs and allow American families to keep more of their hard-earned paychecks.

Thomas Jefferson once said, “A wise and frugal government, which shall leave men free to regulate their own pursuits of industry and improvement, and shall not take from the mouth of labor the bread it has earned - this is the sum of good government.” This kind of good government is the exact remedy for these tough economic times.