

By Rep. Steve King

Over the past few weeks, the Big Three domestic automakers and the UAW blitzed Capitol Hill and spent millions of dollars to lobby Congress for a taxpayer-funded bailout. Despite their pleas for your money, they refused to make any meaningful reforms or institute new business practices.

Throughout the debate on whether to bail out automakers, I asked a simple question: If the Big Three and the UAW are unwilling to make real concessions, why should taxpayers help them? Giving Detroit and labor unions billions in taxpayer dollars without serious changes in their operating structure is like giving an irresponsible teenager a credit card.

Rather than coming to Washington with a plan that included concessions, automakers and the UAW demanded that taxpayers pay for Detroit's poor decisions for several more months. What is going to change over the next few months? Other than more government intervention in the private sector, nothing will be different, and this same crew will be back on Capitol Hill with their hands out asking Congress for more of your taxpayer money.

Subsidizing the mistakes of poorly-managed automakers will also penalize Americans working on successful production lines. Over 110,000 hard-working Americans are employed by automakers outside the Big Three, and these companies are surviving the current economic downturn.

No one wants our domestic auto industry to fail, but American taxpayers should not have to pick up the tab for overpriced labor and managerial mistakes. American taxpayers cannot afford to rescue every struggling sector of the American economy.

The best solution to this situation is for the UAW to put some skin in the game and make real concessions, such as investing excess money from employer pension funds to help them get back on track. Not surprisingly, liberal Congressional leaders like Nancy Pelosi and Harry Reid disagreed.

Pelosi, Reid and other liberals pushed hard for a plan that would create a national car czar and give the federal government a stake in American companies. The Pelosi plan failed to require any substantive concessions from automakers or the UAW. The very business practices and labor agreements that led to this

situation would remain in place.

I believe Pelosi's bailout will damage free enterprise and harm taxpayers, and I voted against it. Sadly a majority in the House agreed with Speaker Pelosi and voted for her plan. Doing so sent a message that a majority in the House supports market socialism over economic freedom.

Fortunately, the Pelosi bailout plan died in the Senate, and now everything goes back to the drawing board. Though no bill has passed, Pelosi, Reid and other Congressional leaders failed the American people on this issue. These leaders could have pushed for major reform of poorly-managed automakers and the UAW, but instead leadership pursued a plan without meaningful concessions from either.

The coming months look like the beginning of an historic level of market socialism in America. I am disappointed that liberals like Pelosi and Reid failed to press the Big Three and the UAW for real reform. But, I am glad that the taxpayers were heard and that the bailout has been stopped, for now.

We all want the domestic auto industry to rebound, but we must not put future generations in debt to pay for more of the same. Until the automakers and unions are willing to change, taxpayers should demand their representatives oppose any more bailouts.