

# CHAMBER OF COMMERCE BIDS “CAMPAIGN FOR FREE ENTERPRISE” TO ATTACK THE BAILOUTS IT DOESN'T LIKE

Josh is right—Jeanne Cummings' report that the Chamber of Commerce is launching a "Campaign for Free Enterprise" seems to have regurgitated the Chamber's press release uncritically:

The *Politico* has a report on a proposed plan from the US Chamber of Commerce to spend up to \$100 million on opposing President Obama's various economic, energy and health care reforms. But it's a bit hard to distinguish the *Politico* article from a Chamber press release. Here are some nuggets from the article itself ...

As the Obama administration encroaches deeper into the private sector and Congress contemplates more regulations, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce is launching a multimillion-dollar campaign to defend the free market system.

...

Taken together, the government could soon determine who gets a mortgage, which cars consumers can buy, the type of treatments patients will get and how many credit cards a person can carry.

The government won't let me buy a Toyota? Do I have to buy a GM car?

Really?

I'm guessing this claim came right from the press release, too:

The administration's aggressive action on so many fronts has put the business community on defense in a way not seen in more than a decade – and it's losing more often than it's winning.

But in addition to questioning whether the business community is losing more than it's winning—and whether we'll still be able to buy Toyotas—I'd have liked Cummings to ask one more critical question: about timing. The Chamber of Commerce did not launch this campaign when Bush took an even bigger stake in AIG. It did not launch this campaign when the Federal Government dumped billions of TARP dollars to keep the banking system afloat. In fact, the Chamber's Tom Donohue all but admits he's happy that the bankers got to suck at the federal teat for the last nine months.

"Dire economic circumstances have certainly justified some out-of-the-ordinary remedial actions by government," said Chamber President Tom Donohue, referring to the bank bailouts and the \$787 billion economic stimulus program.

What bugs Donohue, apparently, is not the possibility that corporations can be massive recipients of federal welfare. What appears to bother him is that the federal government would ask something else in exchange or—shockers!!—compete with the private sector in something like health care (buzz me when Donohue starts complaining that FedEx has to compete against the postal service).

This is a campaign to paper over the federal welfare corporations have been sucking up for the last nine months, an attempt re-set the

narrative as if capitalism hadn't almost completely collapsed.

"We have got to go out in a big-time way and remind all Americans that it was a free enterprise system based on the values of individual initiative, hard work, risk innovation and profit which built our great country," he's expected to tell Chamber board members Wednesday in a speech unveiling the program.

And apparently, Cummings didn't notice the whole corporations on welfare bit.