

THE SUN BELT NEEDS A KILLER APP

☒ Fresh off Obama imploring the country to “win the [vaguely defined, and definitely not defined as preventing climate change] future,” Calculated Risk has a new chart, showing the decline in unemployment by state. It’s useful to show not just which states are unemployment clusterfucks (Michigan remains near the top, though CA and FL passed it in overall unemployment last month), but also where it’s getting better.

And it’s getting better in the Midwest, where the auto bailout (as well as battery and related subsidies) has provided stimulus that led directly to new jobs.

But it’s not getting (much) better in the states where the housing market, not rusty industries, was the primary cause of the crash: NV, CA, FL, AZ. Now, presumably, that’s partly because the housing crisis—notably underwater homes—remain a big drain on the economy. But it also seems likely that part of the problem is that nothing has replaced housing as the driver of growth. Unlike the Midwest, which has the auto industry (for better or worse), several of the other clusterfuck states were relying on housing.

Now, there’s a lot more that might be gleaned from this chart—why, for example, is the Northeast also getting better? Is AL’s improvement about cars or defense or something else?

The jobs crisis in this country remains horrible just about everywhere. But in some places, it is actually getting better. Slowly. We’d do well to understand what’s driving that improvement and why other regions aren’t sharing in it.