

Up to speed

Outta the Zone... Summer is a time for fun, and that's why I'm looking forward to the concert at The Wex on Saturday night, July 31. Our good friends, KISS tribute band, Mr. Speed from Cleveland, will be in town to rock us with their full-blast KISS show.

You may remember that Mr. Speed's show in September at Cadillac High sold out. This is a second chance for everyone to be a part of the action once again. I'm not a part of this promotion, but I've already nabbed my tickets and plan to be on hand as a spectator.

The best part is that, once again, part of the proceeds will go to the Cadillac Viking Boosters. You may know that the Boosters have committed to paying for freshman sports this year, so participating in that effort and getting to see a first-class rock concert in the bargain is a great 2-for-1 deal. (See the opening song from the September concert on YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3PMsZarc1Xg>.)

• If rock and roll isn't entertaining enough for you, how about a look into the hilarious fantasy world we know as "politics?" A study by CNBC naming the Top Ten States for Business caught my eye last week. In the fourth annual report, of the top 10 states for business, six have Republican governors, led by Texas at number one. Of the bottom 10, seven have Republican governors (including seven of the bottom eight and the four worst).

So, my question is this: Since Republicans claim to have all the answers when it comes to "running things like a business," why haven't the governors at the top giv-

en the formula for success to the poor saps at the bottom?

Finishing dead last was Alaska. This is the state that gave us Sarah Palin, who abandoned her elected position as governor and now tours the country railing against big government while urging people to become more independent.

This is a strange position coming from a state that has what's called a "Permanent Fund" that pays each man, woman and child who has lived there at least a year an annual "dividend" (which is a polite term for government handout). The payout last year was \$1,305 per person.

Heck, you don't even need to be alive to collect the dough. Business Week reports that the Alaska House passed a bill that allows dead people to claim one last payout if they had lived in Alaska for 180 days or more during the year they died. The actual cash would go to the beneficiaries.

And even though the fund's managers report that "the fund's earning account might not cover this year's full dividend" because of a drop in oil prices, it's not likely they'll cancel a payout even if they have to dip into other state revenues. Says the Alaska Dispatch: "The dividend... is seen by others as their due share of oil wealth and by low-income Alaskans as essential to making ends meet... and that to suggest an alternative use for the money is considered



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political death.... denying Alaskans the dividend could end a political career."

Gee, "sharing" big government wealth with "low income" people and thinking a government handout is a "due share" sounds a lot like socialism.

But you'd have to expect that from a state that primarily gets its revenues from taxing the pants off corporations and collecting federal subsidies.

According to the conservative Tax Foundation: "Alaska's corporate tax structure consists of 10 separate brackets with a top rate of 9.4 percent kicking in at an income level of \$90,000 — the fourth highest rate in the nation. In fiscal year 2008, Alaska's state-level corporate tax collections (excluding local taxes) reached \$1,433 per capita, which ranked highest in the nation."

Calling Alaska a "beneficiary state," the Foundation noted, "Alaska taxpayers receive more federal funding per dollar of federal taxes paid compared to the average state... Per dollar of Federal tax collected, Alaska citizens received approximately \$1.84 in the way of federal spending. This ranks the state 3rd highest nationally."

With this in mind, why any citizen of Michigan would take advice from an Alaskan politician regarding economic matters is a mystery. In eight of the 10 CNBC business rating categories, Michigan finished ahead of Alaska. Cost of doing business — Michigan 32, Alaska

46; Workforce — MI 41, AK 45; Transportation — MI 24, AK 50; Technology & Innovation — MI 7, AK 41; Education — MI 35, AK 45; Business Friendliness — MI 35, AK 44; Access to Capital — MI 18, AK 40; Cost of living — MI 24, AK 47; Quality of life — AK 26, MI 36; Economy — AK 41, MI 47 (www.cnbc.com/id/37516043).

• Finally, you have to give credit where credit is due. Even though many conservatives are railing against Republicans who voted in favor of the Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP), USA Today said: "Fortunately in 2008, President Bush and Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson ... had the choice of letting the financial system collapse or coming to its rescue." The paper also observed, "The successful legislative push for TARP was supported by Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky and House Republican leader John Boehner of Ohio."

The paper stated that according to a Treasury Department report, "The core of the program, a series of direct investments in banks, is likely to turn a tidy profit ... Of the \$147 billion paid back so far, \$24 billion is profit coming from dividends and interest, and the appreciation of the value of stock and warrants sold by the government."

Hey, kudos, President Bush and his supporters. Don't pay any attention to those who now call you socialists. It looks like you'll have the last laugh. Way to go!

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