UAW Urges Support For 'Cash For Clunkers' Bill

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WASHINGTON (AP) — The United Auto Workers union urged senators on Monday to reject any attempt to block a "cash for clunkers" proposal designed to generate new auto sales.

The Senate is expected to consider the proposal this week to provide vouchers to consumers who turn in their gas-guzzling cars and trucks for the purchase of more fuel-efficient vehicles. Lawmakers secured $1 billion for the proposal in the $106 billion war-funding plan, a large down-payment on the $4 billion program.

Sen. Judd Gregg, R-N.H., suggested he may attempt a procedural move to strip the "cash for clunkers" measure from the spending bill. Gregg said the car bill would drive up the federal debt while giving consumers vouchers to buy vehicles that could get fewer than 20 miles per gallon.

Alan Reuther, the UAW's legislative director, urged senators to oppose Gregg's efforts, calling the bill "the single most important step Congress can take right now to assist the auto industry." A Gregg spokeswoman could not immediately comment on the UAW letter.

The House approved a bill last week that would give consumers vouchers of $3,500 to $4,500 when they trade in a gas-guzzler to buy a new car, truck, sport utility vehicle or minivan that gets 2 mpg to 10 mpg more. Traded-in vehicles would be destroyed.

Critics have said even buyers of some Hummer vehicles could qualify for the vouchers and the plan requires only marginal fuel-efficiency gains in the new vehicle. Sens. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., and Susan Collins, R-Maine, have said the House plan does little to encourage the purchases of fuel-efficient vehicles and amounted to another bailout of the car companies.

General Motors Corp. and Chrysler Group LLC have received billions in government aid as the industry has watched auto sales drop precipitously during the past year.

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