

DET NEWS: Union protesters targeting Romney**Date:** Thursday, June 09 @ 08:34:54 EDT**Topic:** UAW

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/ Detroit News Lansing Bureau

Livonia — A group of union protesters is awaiting Republican presidential candidate and Michigan native Mitt Romney this morning at Senate Coney Island and Restaurant.

The demonstrators, about 80 chanting and carrying signs, say if Romney had been in charge of the country the past few years, Michigan's auto industry would not be experiencing its current economic rebound.

"We just hired 12 new people at our facility this week, which is a big deal," said Jaron Garza, 36, of Ferndale, who works at General Motors' Tech Center in Warren and is a member of UAW 160. "If he was in charge, I don't think it would have turned out the way it did."

Romney is under fire for a 2008 op-ed piece he authored in the New York Times titled "Let Detroit Go Bankrupt," that advised against a federal bailout of the automotive industry.

Romney says the article argued for a controlled bankruptcy for the car companies — exactly the route that preceded turnarounds for both General Motors and Chrysler.

Dave Ennis of Canton Township, a retired high school teacher, ate breakfast this morning at the coney island in Livonia, where Romney was to make his first campaign stop of the day.

"I think he's very intelligent" and "a man of a lot of experience," but "I think he was wrong on the cars," said Ennis, 70.

It's not so much that the car companies deserved a bailout, but the jobs impact of their demise would have been too great, Ennis said.

"What do we have if we don't have them?" Ennis asked of the auto companies. "We don't have anything."

Ennis said he doesn't like the health care plan Romney implemented in Massachusetts or President Obama's federal plan, which is similar in mandating that people buy health insurance.

"He was kind of liberal when it was expedient" but later became more conservative, Ennis said of Romney.

"If he's conservative, he's got to wear it on his sleeve," he said.

Romney also has a campaign stop this morning in Detroit at Bizdom U, a mentorship and training school for future entrepreneurs.