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June 23, 2013 8:00 AM

KEITH CRAIN: Great improvements for Cobo Center

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Last week, while all sorts of other stories were swirling around in and around Southeast Michigan, Cobo Center made some significant work rule changes that will be great for Detroit and the region.

The success of Cobo is a very important part of the economy of Detroit and the entire area.

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Cobo has simply not been competitive. That's meant lost business to other facilities and regions.

And when Cobo loses, everyone loses. The amount of economic development resulting from an exhibit or trade show at Cobo amounts to millions of dollars spent in our community.

It's exciting to know that Cobo and the many people who work there realize just how important it is to be competitive. Las Vegas and Orlando, Fla., are aggressively going after every trade show in the country. It was impossible to try to compete with those cities when there were antiquated rules that simply raised the cost of exhibiting in Detroit.

Everyone who's involved should be applauded for the rational and reasoned approached they have taken to making Cobo competitive in this tough environment.

Every cab driver, restaurant manager, hotel owner and the hundreds of businesses that thrive with every new and expanded trade show should thank the unions and the management of Cobo. They understood the competitive environment and adjusted their rules to encourage companies to consider Detroit and Cobo.

For years, it simply was not a competitive venue. The facility was old and outdated, and the union rules discouraged trade shows from even considering Detroit.

I'd like to think that it has all changed today. With these realistic changes in rules for companies and groups using Cobo for their shows, it would seem that our convention bureau should be able to be successful in trying to sell the advantages of Detroit.

It's very exciting to see a new Cobo that has had millions of dollars spent to refurbish and revitalize our facility. We've got a new management that represents all of Southeast Michigan, and now we've got some of the most competitive work rules in the country.

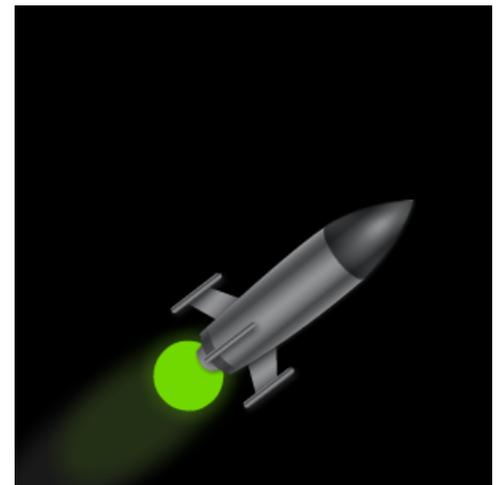
We've got ourselves a great package that in the short and long term will pay off handsomely.



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Everyone who had a hand in this remarkable effort deserves to be congratulated. It's going to make a big difference.

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