

YOUR GUIDE TO HAUNTED HOUSES

IN PLAY



LIONS, BEARS: SAME DEFENSE, BUT NOT RESULT

SPORTS, 1C

ON GUARD FOR 177 YEARS

Detroit Free Press

WWW.FREEP.COM THURSDAY OCT. 2, 2008 METRO EDITION

AT FREEP.COM: BAILOUT VOTE RESULTS

CRISIS SLAMS AUTOS

VICE PRESIDENTIAL SHOWDOWN AT 9 TONIGHT

Why we'll watch

Stage set for high-stakes political theater

See the debate live on major TV networks and freep.com

WHAT'S AT STAKE

For Republican Sarah Palin: It could be her last big chance to convince voters that she is capable of running the country.

For Democrat Joe Biden: This is his chance to show that he is knowledgeable without being dismissive of his opponent.



No carmaker spared pain in worst month since '93

By SARAH A. WEBSTER
FREE PRESS BUSINESS WRITER

U.S. auto sales cratered to their lowest level in 15 years last month as the destructive, long-reaching tentacles of the nation's economic crisis reached deep into the consumer psyche, dealership showrooms and auto-lending offices.

The effect: Anxious consumers virtually halted spending. Once-bustling dealerships looked increasingly like ghost towns.

And auto lenders with little cash at their disposal rejected thousands of loan applications from consumers who had the stomach to attempt to buy a new car or truck.

In the end, the total number of vehicles sold was the lowest since February 1993.

There's little doubt among industry insiders that the problem escalated in the last 10 days of the month, after Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson announced on Sept. 19 that a \$700-billion bailout package

was necessary to save the U.S. economy.

"Once they officially announced the sky was going to fall, that sort of froze everybody," said Mike Jackson, the chief executive officer of AutoNation Inc., which owns 317 dealerships in 15 states and is the top seller of Detroit's brands.

"Things were not good to begin with," he said Wednesday after the results were announced. "But the credit crisis exploded exponentially in September. ... The banks are looking for any excuse to say, 'No.'"

CNW Marketing Research in Bandon, Ore., which studies traffic in showrooms, said the last 10 days of September was the worst showing since CNW began keeping track in 1986.

"Blowout sales aren't working," Art Spinella, president of CNW, said in a Wednesday note that revealed his findings.

See SALES, 2A

SEPTEMBER SALES

(Compared with a year ago)

GM **-15.6%**

FORD **-34.5%**

CHRYSLER **-32.8%**

TOYOTA **-32.3%**

HONDA **-24.0%**

NISSAN **-36.8%**

HYUNDAI **-25.4%**

INDUSTRY **-26.6%**

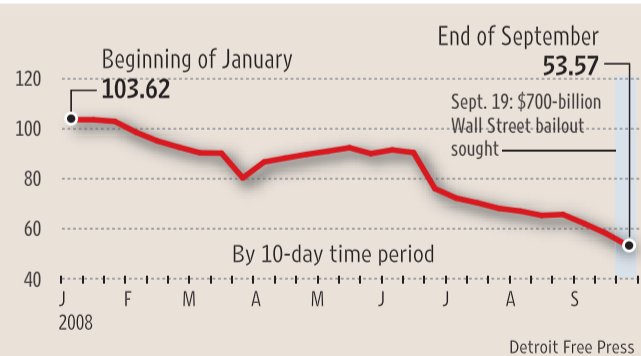
Source: Autodata Corp.
Detroit Free Press

Showroom traffic stalls

Fewer U.S. consumers have been visiting dealerships as the economy has worsened.

Index is based on 1986 = 100
Index adjusted to reflect adult population changes

Source: CNW Marketing Research



Obamas hit state

Sen. Barack Obama is to visit Grand Rapids and East Lansing today while his wife, Michelle Obama, is to speak in Saginaw and Clinton Township. Details, 7A

By CHUCK RAASCH
GANNETT NEWS SERVICE

ST. LOUIS — Joe Biden will be on the stage, too, but in many ways, tonight's vice presidential debate will be all about Sarah Palin.

Many Americans know her only as a governor of Alaska who gave a pretty good speech at the Republican National Convention and has been surrounded by controversy since.

She has been praised, ridiculed, questioned and sequestered. And maybe most important, she has become iconic.

Tina Fey has her down on "Saturday Night Live." Palin-style glasses are hard to get in some parts of America.

But can Palin — who can gut big game — parry with Biden, a longtime Democratic senator from Delaware,

when the topic goes to Wall Street finance or Venezuela's nuclear ambitions?

Experts said the pairing sets up a challenge for both contenders — one of content for Palin and style for Biden. For viewers, the potential for great political theater is all there.

Biden, who can toggle between eloquence and verbosity in the same speech, recently ridiculed one of his own campaign ads critical of GOP presidential nominee John McCain, a longtime friend in the Senate.

Biden also botched history and technology when he incorrectly said Franklin Roosevelt was president when the stock market crashed in 1929 and had FDR going on television a decade before

See DEBATE, 7A

HOUSE TO VOTE AGAIN FRIDAY

Bailout revisions soften opposition

By JUSTIN HYDE
FREE PRESS WASHINGTON STAFF

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Senate moved toward approving a historic \$700-billion rescue of lenders on Wednesday, making a few changes to help the pact gather enough momentum to survive a second pass through the U.S. House on Friday.

Although the changes targeted some of the concerns the plan's House opponents held, it wasn't clear whether they would be enough to secure passage. And several lawmakers in both chambers remained opposed to the idea of giving Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson a \$700-billion shopping spree.

Lawmakers on both sides ex-

pected the rescue to pass the Senate. One of Michigan's two Democratic senators supported the bill and the other was undecided before the vote.

"The risks to the economy are just simply too great to let this continue to free-fall," said Sen. Carl Levin, who backs the deal. "There's too many people's pensions and savings and businesses that could get wiped out."

"There are no guarantees this will turn it around quickly, but without this kind of a stabilization package the confidence will be shot. It's already shaky, and it will be shot if Congress doesn't act."

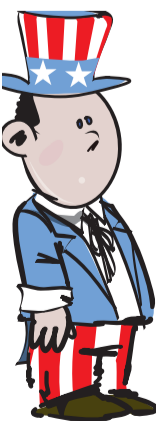
See BAILOUT, 8A

Inside: Bailout questions answered

■ Experts' advice from Web chat at freep.com. 9A

■ You asked, and we tracked down the answers. 9A

■ Step-by-step, how this mess happened. 8A



CHEVY PRESENTS THE CRUZE

MARK PHELAN

It's got more juice than the Volt. It's bigger (in a sense) than the Silverado.

The Chevrolet Cruze compact car, which was revealed Wednesday on the eve of the Paris motor show, is expected to sell in bigger numbers than the Silverado full-size pickup and make more money —

much faster — than the electric-drive Volt.

Designed to accelerate Chevy's global growth, it was engineered in Korea, goes on sale in Europe next year and begins production in Ohio in 2010.

■ MORE ON THE CRUZE, 1D
■ TRAVERSE CROSSOVER IS CHEVY'S BEST IN DECADES. 1E



FRANCOIS MORI/Associated Press



40788 11000
50¢ Wayne, Oakland & Macomb counties 75¢ Elsewhere

CLOUDY, CHILLY
There's a chance of showers in the afternoon.
Chuck Gaidica's forecast, 6B

56 | 42
HIGH | LOW



INDEX
Vol. 178, Number 151
© 2008
Detroit Free Press Inc.
Printed in the U.S.

Bridge.....2F Deaths.....4B Movie Guide...Play
Business.....1D Editorials.....12A 16
Classified.....1F Horoscope...Play 43 Puzzle Page.....2F
Comics...Play 40-43 Lottery.....2A Television...Play 39
Corrections.....2A Motor City.....1E Motor City.....1E

CONTACT US
Delivery questions: 800-395-3300
News tip hotline: 313-222-6600
Classified: 586-977-7500; 800-926-8237