

# Detroit Free Press

## **Economic summit bids for lasting impression**

March 4, 2009

The timing for the National Summit, the ambitious high-level conference on economic issues being convened June 15-17 at Ford Field by the Detroit Economic Club, could not be more perfect, given the gravity of the global crisis.

But how does it become more than a soon-to-be-forgotten group of speeches by CEOs and other big brains about energy, manufacturing, technology and the environment?

How can it become an ongoing dialogue with major impact on key policy decisions?

Well, it would help if President Barack Obama shows up to speak and brings along several cabinet members to join in the give-and-take.

Beth Chappell, president of the DEC and the driving force behind the summit, is working like crazy on that -- but as is usually the case with a sitting president, a commitment doesn't come until a week or two before the event.

Meanwhile, four professional services firms that are normally fierce competitors -- Deloitte, Ernst & Young, PricewaterhouseCoopers and McKinsey & Co. -- are collaborating in an effort to lead the topical discussions with a goal of identifying policy solutions to deal with the nation's huge economic challenges.

"By Day 3 of the summit," says Tom Dekar, vice chairman of Deloitte, "we hope to have panels of CEOs and cabinet-level people, maybe President Obama himself, engaged in a policy dialogue with several thousand attendees, plus maybe 100,000 more on the Internet."

Adds Chappell, "We want to emerge from this with kind of a national declaration of competitiveness, with ideas and a dialogue we can build on year after year."

Chappell said more than 40 CEOs have already agreed to speak, ranging from the heads of UPS and FedEx to oil giant ConocoPhillips, along with Delta Air Lines, US Airways, Dow Chemical, Humana, Office Depot and each of the Detroit Three automobile companies.

For more information on the summit, including a list of committed speakers, go to [www.nationalsummit.org](http://www.nationalsummit.org). Contact TOM WALSH at 313-223-4430 or [twalsh@freepress.com](mailto:twalsh@freepress.com)