

Clemency for Clunkers

It is a shocking contrast. On one side of town is the Fairfield Auto Mall suddenly alive with new car buyers all leaving their so-called clunkers to be destroyed. On the other side of town is the Mission Solano used car lot with an inventory of seven cars. Donations are down at the Mission lot. There is little chance for recovery as long as the government is in the car business, paying up to \$4,500 for cars that once were candidates for being donated to the Mission lot.

Don't get me wrong, I am happy for the business at the new car lots. These dealers have traditionally been some of the most generous supporters of our work. But, any time Washington DC starts choosing winners, they necessarily create losers. The Mission lot offers a tax deduction for car donations. That hardly compares with a generous subsidy from Uncle Sam for new wheels.

Mission Solano uses the car lot profits to feed and house the homeless. Those profits were already down as consumers hold onto old cars longer or broker their own sales to weather the bad economy. But, the Cash for Clunkers program is also hurting those who traditionally turn to the Mission to buy low priced transportation. The car they might have purchased is now sitting between the Auto Mall and the freeway with a scribbled message: Not for Sale. Must be Crushed.

If you have not visited this death row of automobiles, I would encourage you to do so. But don't go expecting to find 40 year old jalopies that limped the last mile to the dealer. Instead you will find cars that are required to be no older than 25 years and running. The federal government is literally paying to have these cars put to death rather than have them go to a buyer who can not afford anything better. The government hopes to give the last rights to 750,000 usable cars nationwide.

At Mission Solano we start with a different perspective on what is salvageable. We know a little bit about recycling what society casts off. We do this at our thrift store and at our car lot. And we do it every day with men and women who have lost hope.

Mission Solano is calling for a Clemency for Clunkers program. Before these 750,000 cars meet their scheduled fate, we are calling for a grant of clemency and a return to the streets. At Mission Solano we will take as many of these cars as the government wants to send our way. Bring us your tired and your poor cars. We won't crush them. We'll put them back on the streets where they belong.

Please help us by donating your clunker to Mission Solano now. For information call (707) 425-3663.

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