

# Cobo's \$288-million funding question

## It's unclear whether stimulus cash applies

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If, as U.S. Rep. John Conyers suggested on Saturday, it is "more likely than not" that funds from the \$787-billion [economic stimulus bill](#) could be used to cover the cost of expanding and renovating Detroit's Cobo Center, he seems to be one of the few in the nation's capital to make mention of it.

On Monday, even his staff was researching the issue to determine if any such money would be available.

A Free Press analysis of the bill could not locate any such funding source and agencies tasked with doling out the money said it was unclear whether Cobo would qualify and, if it did, whether there would be enough to cover the \$288 million needed.

But while Gov. Jennifer Granholm's office reiterated Monday that no stimulus dollars would be available for Cobo, that's likely not the whole story, either. Detroit is set to get \$10 million in community development money, a portion or all of which, in theory, could be directed at Cobo.

Other funding streams -- like weatherization money for federal buildings or transit cash -- might be tapped, too. But, again, it would likely cover only a small piece of the cost.

Detroit officials wouldn't be the first to ask for cash for convention centers: The mayor of Albany, N.Y., is looking for stimulus cash for that city's convention center, according to local [television](#).

Of course, Congress could always attempt to rewrite the rules to make money available for any project. But that could set off a bidding war that would freeze Capitol Hill.

One other problem with using stimulus money for Cobo: There would be no dedicated future stream of revenue to pay off bonds for the work. Right now, about \$16 million a year from a statewide liquor tax and a tri-county tax on hotel rooms is set to be used.

The [stimulus bill](#), by contrast, is a onetime deal.

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