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Michigan: Its Own Worst Enemy

Posted by **KAREN DYBIS** Friday, February 5, 2010 at 2:26 pm

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Sometimes, it feels like Michigan's gray skies will never improve.

First, the state killed off the [Michigan State Fair](#), citing budget constraints.

Now, the Shrine Circus may be kaput because Gov. Jennifer Granholm and her crew say the Shriners cannot rent the Fair's Coliseum.

Shutting down a fairground and shunning a circus? This state is such a bummer.

However, Jenny G. has until tomorrow to save the circus. A [petition](#) to that end is circulating around and the Shriners are asking folks to call the Gov to appeal her earlier decision. No word yet today whether their pitch will be successful.

Some background: The Shrine Circus has been held in the Michigan State Fair Coliseum nearly every year since it moved from the Light Guard Armory in 1926. Since the Michigan State Fairgrounds were closed last fall due to the state of Michigan's budget deficit, the Shriners have been working diligently to relocate but were unable to find an alternate location that can suitably accommodate their first-class circus.

A resolution by Detroit City Council Member Kenneth V. Cockrel, Jr, to open the Michigan State Fairgrounds to host the circus was passed unanimously by the Detroit City Council Jan. 26th and was sent to Granholm's office for her consideration. Without her prompt review and approval, the Shrine Circus will not take place this year.

At stake is the loss of \$42,000 in rental revenue the state would earn from the event and financial harm to the Detroit Area Shriners when one of their largest fundraisers (and another Detroit, Michigan tradition) is forced to shut down.

The scheduled date for the circus is March 18-21, 2010. Circus Director Chuck Baer said that he hopes a decision is made by a Feb. 6 deadline to allow organizers enough time to draw sponsors, begin production and promotions and begin ticket sales.

Baer said the state has been taking his calls; Jenny's Chief of Staff couldn't be nicer, he noted. But they are running him around in circles.

"I've got a check here for \$42,000 with the state's name on it," Baer said. "I'm confused as to what their real intent is. ... It's a major fundraiser for us (and) we could be at risk of having to cut back on our programs because of it."

A state spokeswoman told [The Detroit News](#) that the site was not available and "during tough economic times government can't be all things to all people." Thanks for that, missy.

According to Crain's Detroit:

The Shriners, a local unit of the Moslem Shriners Ancient Arabic Order Nobles of the Mystic Shrine, operate on a \$1.5 million budget locally. Last year, the organization grossed \$429,000 from the Shrine Circus held at the Michigan State Fairgrounds and paid the state \$42,000 to rent the site. The group raises money to support its Shriners Hospitals for Children, a network of 22 pediatric specialty hospitals operated by the Shriners.

By the way, the story was picked up by the Chicago Tribune, New York Times and the

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1 I can't believe that the state would say no to such a great organization, who does so much to help children in Michigan. What is really wrong with our elected officials. Just let the fairgrounds sit empty and useless or make a little money off of it and help out a charity. It really is embarrassing.

robertmprice
February 5, 2010 at 3:57 pm
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I would hope that some one makes this right.

2 Ugh,

Back to the Mayor's Party.
I think that I'll include her.

islandarchitec...
February 5, 2010 at 4:15 pm
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3 ...Cr-p, man! The only reason govt. exists is to bring about events, help, and other things, that individuals , CAN'T! I think 'Granny' has done a pretty good job with events out of her control! (here that Fatty Engler!.. You bankrupted state and made our roads and parks, the worst!..It's no surprise the obly private job he ever had is as a Foreign car lobbyist). But, Jen....You've gotta KEEP FAIR, KEEP Shrine Circus..THESE ARE MI.-Detroit. We've lost almost any local 'flavor'(sorry) ..Vernors, Faygo, many others having OUR Cos. in THEIR hands! Ask Upjohn, ..the others!...I'll go sit in my corner, now. pss Did anyone else get to go to Shrine Cicus because they made the Honor Roll in 5th grade?! Thnx, Mrs. Carrol!! de Sales!...Did anyone else buy a live , boxed Chameleon?/

davebailey
February 6, 2010 at 2:31 pm
[Log in to Reply](#)

4 The Granholm administration has a chance to do two things: accept a good business deal that benefits the good people of the state of Michigan and to do something nice for the Shriners by doing so. Sadly, it might not do either

charlessbaer
February 7, 2010 at 9:55 am
[Log in to Reply](#)

5 The State will not allow the Circus at the Fairgrounds. The Circus in Lansing doesn't want competition.

kasperson
February 8, 2010 at 9:04 am
[Log in to Reply](#)

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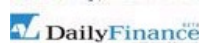
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MAYRA GONZALEZ, a spokeswoman for UC Berkeley's Latino community, on the students who started a hunger strike to demand, among other measures, that the university oppose the new Arizona immigration law and make the campus a haven for undocumented immigrants

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