

# Dear Santa

## All I want for Christmas is a bailout

BY STEVE WEINTZ  
SPECIAL TO THE DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

### Guest writer

The Hon. Henry M. Paulson Jr.  
Secretary of the Treasury  
Washington, D.C., 20220

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I am writing to you at the suggestion of Mr. S. Claus who offices at the North Pole. As a consultant to a small business that is having a tough time in this economic downturn, I wrote to Mr. Claus back in mid-October. Here is his reply, which he suggested I forward to you.

Dear Steven:

This acknowledges your recent letter and request for early stage capital for your client.

I was surprised to hear from you since it has been 45 years since you last wrote to me. When you were 7, you wanted me to send you a Red Ryder BB gun. I wrote back to you that I was afraid you would shoot your eye out.

Anyway, I am glad to hear from you. In addition to the millions of letters from little boys and girls around the world, I am also receiving this year a ton of mail from middle-aged businessmen just like you who I have not heard from in decades. Instead of toys, you all want money in varying amounts. Requests have been as low as \$10,000 with the highest being \$85 billion from a fellow named Edward Liddy who is CEO of a company called AIG. Then there were the guys from the car companies: Rick Wagoner from GM, Ford chief Alan Mulally and Bob Nardelli of Chrysler. I think they wanted \$35 billion. Have you heard of them?

Under normal circumstances I might be able to help you. Unfortunately, I must tell you that the current credit crunch has had a dramatic impact on operations here. Cash flow is very tight and I am not sure I will be able to make payroll for my 535,785 elves. I am in the process of negotiating a bailout with U.S. Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson and other world economic leaders as I write.

Even more disturbing is the realization that I may have caused this entire world economic disaster. You see, I've been making toys since the 11th century (over 1,000 years) on credit.

Since I first opened my shop, I have had a very secret and complex international finance arrangement. It all began with Germany in 1006. My popularity grew—who doesn't like free toys?—and my area of distribution spread throughout

Europe and ultimately to the Colonies, which later became the United States.

More and more countries extended me credit in secret so I could hire more elves and make more toys. You can imagine what the tab is for over 1,000 years of toys.

All along I've been concerned about this rising debt. Throughout the centuries I've expressed my concern. In 1792, I had a long discussion with George Washington. "Don't worry about it, Santa. Let the government work out the details about how to pay off the debt." Politicians are all the same. They never worry about "details." Furthermore, what politician would want to put a stop to Santa Claus delivering free toys to children?

So it is not the sale of sub-prime mortgages in the United States that has brought the world economy down, but the practice of Christmas and the idea that I could manufacture and distribute toys for 1,000 years without anyone actually having to pay for them. I'm afraid the day of reckoning is at hand. Hopefully, Secretary Paulson and his international treasury counterparts can work things out. I suggest that you follow my lead and contact the secretary yourself. Mention my name and reference this letter. Perhaps that will help.

I do have one bit of good news for you. I have discovered that I have one Red Ryder BB gun still left in inventory. Because you are now age 52, I feel more confident that you will not shoot your eye out. I'll deliver it on the 25th. No need to put out milk and cookies.

Steven, it was great to hear from you again. Do let me know the outcome of your communication with the secretary.

Merry Christmas!  
Mr. Santa Claus

So how about it, Mr. Secretary? Can we get some money? A few million would probably do it. Whatever you feel like sending us would be greatly appreciated.

Regards,  
Steve Weintz  
President

Steve Weintz of Little Rock is a free-lance writer and president of SBW Ventures, Inc., a business development consulting firm.

