

China is a hot topic in the U.S.

By Louise With

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Voters in Ohio have met more presidents than most other states. When the United States goes to the polls, Ohio is always to be found in the small, exclusive circle of swing states that end up deciding it all. For Mitt Romney, the task is clear. No Republican has won the White House without Ohio—and currently Romney is behind in state polls, by over from percentage points on average. The explanation is probably from both the automotive industry and the broader economy. In his first term as President, Barack Obama decided to take a chance and help America's ailing automotive industry, while Mitt Romney wrote in a by-now-famous newspaper post that the industry should be allowed to go bankrupt. A rescue plank from Obama and taxpayers helped Detroit and Michigan, but also Ohio, where up to 12 percent of the labor force works in the automotive industry. And then there's the broader economy, which generally shows good performance in Ohio, where the unemployment rate of 7.2 percent is well below the national average of 8.1.

Fear of Job Losses

The fear of losing jobs to China, however, is continued there. Obama and Romney diligently accuse each other to be too soft against the Chinese. Obama has brought several cases before the World Trade Organization (WTO), while Romney regularly says that the Chinese are "cheating." In Toledo in Northwest Ohio, there are also voters who fear Chinese competition. But the majority supports the city's active China strategy, explains Mayor Michael Bell. "There may be public attacks and fire. But there are many more people coming up to me in and saying: "Good work," he says.

The Biggest Obstacles

Among the main obstacles are America's strict visa rules, explains Dean Monske, head of Toledo's development organization RPG. And there is such harsh election campaign rhetoric. "It's obviously no help," admits Mayor Bell. "But I just hope all know how to distinguish between policy and realities. I do not know whether we are friendlier here in the Midwest than elsewhere in the United States. I call it common good upbringing," says the Mayor, and adds: "We are also working in a small scale here. On the east and west coasts, there is high cost and great competition. With us there is room for something new and room to make a few mistakes, and learn from them. "

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