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Enviro-Labor-Community Coalition Praises Oakland Port for Taking First Step with Ban on Polluting Trucks; Urges Commission to Take Further Action to Sustain Clean Air for the Long Term

On June 16, 2009, the Oakland Port Commission voted to adopt a new truck policy that includes a ban on older, polluting trucks from entering the Port. Starting January 1, 2010, 1993 and older model year trucks and 1994 – 2003 trucks that have not been retrofitted with soot filters, will not be allowed to enter the Port. The Steering Committee of the Coalition for Clean & Safe Ports issued the following statement in response.

We applaud the Oakland Port Commission for approving a truck ban that will result in significant reductions in diesel pollution and public health improvements in our community, and commend Executive Director Omar Benjamin for his leadership on this critical issue.

The truck ban is an important first step toward cleaner air but alone it is not enough. As long as the burden of buying new trucks and retrofits is placed on underpaid, individual drivers instead of the well-capitalized industry, we will fail to achieve the greatest possible environmental and public health gains.

This critical point was made by Dr. Jon Haveman in his presentation to the Port Commission. The Beacon Economics study recommendations make it clear that an employee driver-based port trucking system is necessary to address critical inefficiencies, improve port security and to meet upcoming air quality regulations.

As local environmentalists, public health advocates, community residents, faith and labor leaders we strongly urge the Oakland Port Commission to adopt a resolution supporting the Beacon Economics study finding and recommendations during the next Port Commission meeting July 7.

Protecting public health must be a paramount concern, and we are pleased that at the direction of President Barack Obama's newly appointed Federal Maritime Commission acting chair, Joseph, E. Brennan, the FMC requested dismissal of the case brought against the Southern California ports' Clean Trucks Programs. The Port of Oakland must follow the federal government's example and do everything in its power to ensure that the days the trucking and shipping industry can pollute freely without regard to the local health impacts on the ports' neighbors and workers are numbered.

We understand that clean-air opponents at the American Trucking Association have created serious challenges for local officials with their lawsuit against the Southern California's Clean Trucks Programs, but the Port of Oakland can still go further to denounce the broken port trucking system that breeds deadly air, dead-end jobs, and puts our community's safety and security at risk. A resolution to accept the principles of the Beacon Economics study will send a strong signal that the Port of Oakland is committed to eliminating sweatshop working conditions and unacceptable levels of air pollution stemming from port trucking operations.

We join President Barack Obama, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Senators Barbara Boxer and Dianne Feinstein and the entire California Democratic Congressional delegation, as well as Mayor Ron Dellums, Assemblymembers Sandre Swanson and Loni Hancock, Council members Jan Brunner, Ignacio De La Fuente, Jean Quan and Rebecca Kaplan, and Supervisors Keith Carson, Nate Miley and Scott Haggerty who have endorsed the employee-based port trucking system model.

Federal law must be updated to enable local and state governments to establish environmental, labor and community standards at ports throughout the nation.

The Steering Committee of the Coalition for Clean & Safe Ports

Brian Beveridge, West Oakland Environmental Indicators Project
Doug Bloch, Change to Win
John Brauer, The Workforce Collaborative
Shirley Burnell, Oakland ACORN
Sharon Cornu, Alameda Labor Council, AFL-CIO
Kristi Laughlin, Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice
John Engstrom, East Bay Community Law Center
Milton Lewis, International Brotherhood of Teamsters
Swati Prakash, Pacific Institute
Aditi Vaidya, East Bay Alliance for Sustainable Economy

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The Coalition for Clean & Safe Ports an alliance of independent Port truck drivers and more than 80 environmental, environmental justice, public health, community, labor and faith organizations that promote sustainable economic development at our nation's ports.

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