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Clean Air, Workers' Rights Advocates Praise Rep. Jerrold Nadler for Leading Effort to Modernize U.S. Port Trucking System

78 Members of Congress Lend Their Voices to Growing Momentum to Fight Pollution and Poverty as Critical May 5th Congressional Hearing Approaches

Washington, DC – Congressman Jerrold Nadler (D-NY) today earned immediate praise from an unprecedented national coalition of more than 100 environmental, public health, labor, and community groups [for a letter he sent to Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman James Oberstar \(D-MN\) and Ranking Member John Mica \(R-FL\)](#). Another 78 House members joined the highest ranking Northeastern member of the House Committee to support federal legislation that would allow the nation's ports to enact innovative local solutions to create thousands of green jobs and meet and sustain federal air quality standards.

"We applaud Rep. Nadler for his leadership to update federal transportation law so it is consistent with the Clean Air Act," said Dave Foster, Executive Director of the BlueGreen Alliance. "The Congressman rightly highlights that local government, such as ports, need to be part of a layered approach to reduce air pollution in our cities and across the nation. Our coalition looks forward to working with Congress to advance legislation, which will reduce pollution, make our ports healthier communities and create green jobs."

Thousands of trucking companies in LA have benefited from Mayor Villaraigosa's Clean Truck Program, and ports nationwide have publicly called on Congress to clarify transportation law.

Last week 113 environmental, business, community, labor and consumer advocacy organizations together representing more than 12 million Americans also sent a [letter](#) to Chairman Oberstar and other transportation and ranking Members of Congress, to help protect the most sweeping green-growth model in the nation.

BlueGreen Alliance's Foster added: "Members backing Rep. Nadler's effort range from landlocked states like Arizona to vibrant ports on both coasts. Members of California's delegation have long endorsed Los Angeles' approach, and the Clean Truck Program's success of 70 percent emissions reduction is undisputed."

The link between economic conditions and the environmental crisis in major trade hubs like LA/Long Beach, Oakland, Seattle, Newark and New York was documented in a recent [Demos report](#) by Dr. David Bensman of Rutgers University. Some 87 million Americans now live and work in port regions that violate federal air quality standards where diesel soot-induced asthma, cancer and respiratory illnesses rates are disproportionately high.

Local, state and national organizations as diverse as the Sierra Club, New Jersey Environmental Federation, Natural Resources Defense Council, Teamsters, Church Council of Greater Seattle,

Apollo Alliance, and Center for Environmental Health in Oakland support new port standards that halt the use of contract drivers (also known as “owner-operators”) who eke by with meager wages as a means to transfer responsibility for fleet modernization and maintenance from drivers to capitalized companies. In return for complying with environmental and operational standards, legitimate trucking firms can receive powerful financial incentives or subsidies to help jump-start a cleaner and alternative-fuel market. The Port of Los Angeles implemented such a model in October 2008 and pollution levels dropped dramatically, earning the nation’s largest port a [distinguished honor](#) for its Clean Truck Program from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as well as the Chairman of the [Federal Maritime Commission](#).

However the American Trucking Associations, a Virginia-based lobby opposed to climate-change legislation, has legally challenged the landmark program and stalled its full implementation. As a result, trucking companies accustomed to three decades of lax regulation have pushed the cost of up to 6,600 expensive new vehicles back onto their drivers who average \$10-11 an hour, rendering the diesel-emissions reduction plan environmentally unsustainable and fiscally irresponsible. The trial in U.S. District court began last week.

[A report released by the Sierra Club in April 2010](#) found that proper maintenance of a clean vehicle costs \$8,500 annually, 70 percent higher than what drivers paid to upkeep their old polluting rigs. One local newspaper [reported](#) that one of the affected drivers received a check of \$138 for a long week of hauling after his company deducted various lease fees and taxes.

“[I]t is time for the federal government to develop better means of mitigating pollution and emissions around the ports. While the Port of Los Angeles has taken the lead and instituted a model Clean Trucks program, this is a national issue and deserves a national shift in environmental policy,” said Nadler, whose district includes the nation’s 2nd largest port complex. “I look forward to working with my colleagues and stakeholders within all facets of the port industry to introduce legislation to allow ports to tighten their own environmental standards.”

The Port of Los Angeles, the Port Authority of New York & New Jersey and the Port of Oakland – which together handle over a third of the nation’s container volume each year – have made similar calls on Congress. Mayors Michael Bloomberg (NY), Cory Booker (Newark), Ron Dellums (Oakland), Mike McGinn (Seattle), Stacy Ritter (Broward County, FL) have also notified Congressional leaders of their desire to emulate the LA’s comprehensive strategy as part of their efforts to create green jobs, protect public health and spur economic development.

On Wed, May 5th the House Highways and Transit subcommittee chaired by Rep. Pete DeFazio (D-OR) will hold a [Congressional hearing](#) to explore the benefits of the LA Clean Truck Program.

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*The **Coalition for Clean & Safe Ports** is a partnership of environmental, public health, community, labor and faith organizations that promote sustainable economic development at West Coast ports. We are working to make the port trucking system a less polluting, more competitive generator of good quality jobs for harbor-area residents. The **Coalition for Healthy Ports** is the sister alliance working to create cleaner, greener ports in New York and New Jersey. We are over 100 organizations strong nationwide. For more information, please visit www.cleanandsafeports.org*