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NATIONAL “BLUE-GREEN” COALITION APPLAUDS KEY OBAMA APPOINTEE’S INAUGURAL EARTH DAY AWARD TO LA CLEAN TRUCK PROGRAM

Federal Maritime Commission Recognizes Port of Los Angeles’ Leadership in Advance of Congressional Hearing May 5

Los Angeles, CA – A coalition of more than 100 environmental, public health, labor and community groups nationwide is applauding the Federal Maritime Commission (FMC) for its recognition of the LA Clean Truck Program. The distinguished honor comes just as industry clean-air opponents are attempting to dismantle the successful green-growth initiative in U.S. District Court, a move that has prompted a Transportation & Infrastructure subcommittee hearing in Congress on May 5.

The chair of the FMC, the federal agency responsible for regulating the nation’s international ocean transportation for the benefit of the American consumer, is awarding its inaugural [“Chairman Earth Day Award”](#) to the Port of Los Angeles for its innovative Clean Truck Program, which has reduced toxic diesel emissions from port trucks by more than 70 percent since it was first implemented in October of 2008.

“One of my top priorities at the Federal Maritime Commission is advancing the Obama Administration’s goals of creating green jobs and seeking a more sustainable approach to maritime issues,” said Chairman Richard A. Lidinsky, Jr. “And the Port of Los Angeles has been piloting the way on these issues.”

The announcement is a significant reversal by the federal regulatory agency. Under the Bush Administration, the FMC attempted to block the program, but ultimately dropped its efforts. This is the third recent award granted to the LA Clean Truck Program: [the U.S. EPA recognized it with its rare “Environmental Justice” award](#), and Environment Now, a Los Angeles-based non-profit, celebrated it as a [“Top Achievement”](#) in Southern California last month.

To date, the LA Clean Truck Program has banned more than 2,000 of the dirtiest rigs, and put 6,600 clean trucks, including 600 natural gas trucks, in operation at the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach. However, this early success is in serious jeopardy, as the deep-pocketed American Trucking Associations (ATA) demanded injunctive relief and has stalled the key provisions necessary to sustain the initial drop in emissions.

“The FMC has not only recognized the achievements of the LA Clean Truck Program, but it also validates the fact that the Port of Los Angeles got it right from the beginning,” said Ryan Wiggins of Communities for Clean Ports. “This is a life-saving, green-job

creating program worth fighting for as the nationwide model for ports coast to coast. We cannot let industry polluters reverse all the amazing progress we've made."

Opening statements in the American Trucking Associations vs. the Port of Los Angeles began April 20, 2010. The ATA, which represents less than five percent of companies at the nation's largest twin port complex, is attempting to block a provision of the program that requires capitalized trucking companies to assume the costs of investing in EPA-compliant-fleets. The ATA objects even though trucking firms were offered large public subsidies and handsome financial incentives. Within weeks of offering financial assistance, more than 800 companies small and large signed up to take advantage.

Lax regulation and little enforcement previously allowed companies to profit by hiring the lowest-paid individual contracted drivers with their own old, polluting vehicles. Thousands of U.S. port drivers who were financially prohibited from replacing their vehicles joined environmentalists and labor unions to form a coast-to-coast coalition to advocate for changes to the system.

In the meantime, affected drivers at polluted ports nationwide – precariously hired and exploited under the guise of “independent contractor” – will be required to assume massive debt to purchase new trucks in order to keep their jobs. These individual loans, subject to qualification and good credit scores, will be subsidized by hundreds of millions in taxpayer-funded and port grants. Misclassified port drivers earn \$10-11 an hour, according to a recent [Rutgers study](#).

New clean trucks are much more expensive to maintain – around \$8,500 annually – [a new report](#) by the Sierra Club and other national groups found.

“If these drivers could afford environmentally-friendly trucks with their current wages, air pollution wouldn't be an issue,” said Wiggins. “Modernizing the port is an investment that merits real capital and real commitment by port businesses – not workers behind the wheel – and that is why Congress must take action to protect ports’ regulatory authority.”

The Ports of Oakland, Los Angeles and the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, along with big-city mayors across the country, including Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, New York Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, Newark Mayor Cory Booker, Oakland Mayor Ron Dellums, and Seattle Mayor Mike McGinn, [also want Congress to modernize antiquated statutes of the Federal Motor Carrier Act](#) to clarify that local port officials can fully and legally implement clean truck programs, which spur economic development and improve efficiency, port safety and security enforcement.

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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.*