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<http://blog.cleanandsafeports.org/> or www.cleanandsafeports.org

A Broad Environmental-Community Coalition Applauds the CA Attorney-General Crackdown on Tax-Cheating Trucking Companies in the San Pedro Bay Ports

A Statement by Angelo Logan, East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice

On Sept 5 Attorney-General Jerry Brown announced a set of lawsuits against port trucking companies that abuse their workers by denying them basic employee rights and protections. "These companies engage in cost-cutting schemes that take advantage of their workers and avoid California taxes. They unlawfully classify their workers as 'independent contractors,' circumventing state employment taxes and labor laws that guarantee workers compensation, disability benefits and the right to a minimum wage."

Below is a response by Long Beach resident Angelo Logan of East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice, on behalf of the entire Coalition for Clean & Safe Ports, an alliance of over 35 environmental, public health, faith-based, community and labor organizations:

"If you live near rail yards, transportation corridors or the ports, you don't need piles of proof that the industry scams the system at every turn to squeeze out more profit on the backs of its workers – residents like me pay the price with our lungs and livelihoods each and every day.

"We commend Attorney-General Jerry Brown for rolling up his sleeves to expose the trucking companies that bully port drivers. For too long, unscrupulous employers have gotten away with treating truck drivers as 'independent contractors' to avoid paying taxes and the middle-class wages our communities need. The abuse is so bad this mostly immigrant workforce can only afford to drive the oldest, diesel-spewing rigs which put all of us at risk for cancer, respiratory illness and death. Brown calls this practice illegal, and we agree.

"The Port of Los Angeles examined this broken system and recognized an undeniable link between pollution and poverty in our harbor. It has enacted a comprehensive, sustainable policy that in effect will end this exploitive employer misclassification and protect public health by requiring the industry to clean up its act and clean up this air.

"The Port of Long Beach, on the other hand, kept the status quo in place. They left the choice to on how to label hard-working haulers to the very industry the Attorney-General is cracking down on. Small wonder why 90% of the 16,800 port drivers currently lack employee rights and do not have the freedom to escape the impoverishing grip of the independent contractor sham.

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“The *Press-Telegram* reported this weekend that the Democratic presidential nominee wrote to Mayor Bob Foster some time ago about misclassification at the Long Beach port. Sen. Obama urged an end to the race-to-the-bottom scheme, noting how dire economic conditions led to the environmental crisis we face.

“Now that the Attorney-General has promised more lawsuits and investigations into the widespread industry violations, the Coalition for Clean & Safe Ports calls on the mayor and elected officials in Long Beach to show real leadership. At a time when the city is facing a budget crisis and is asking voters to approve a \$571 million tax hike, residents first want their politicians to stop rewarding law-breaking, polluting companies that cheat us out of millions in taxes, and bring low-wage, no-benefit jobs to our community.

“The state’s crackdown has presented Long Beach officials with an opportunity to help put an end to the third-world wages and pollution once and for all. It’s time to put the anti-labor politics of the past aside, so we can get on with the business of creating a world-class port that prioritizes public health and a sustainable economy.”

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For more information: <http://www.cleanandsafeports.org/> • **The Coalition for Clean & Safe Ports includes:** American Lung Association of California • Clergy & Laity United for Economic Justice (CLUE) • Coalition for Clean Air • Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles • Coalition for a Safe Environment • Communities for a Better Environment • Communities for Clean Ports • East Yard Communities for Environmental Justice • Engineers and Architects Association • Harbor Watts Economic Development Corporation • Hermandad Mexicana Latinoamericana • Long Beach Alliance for Children with Asthma • Long Beach Community Partners Council • Long Beach Greens • Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy • Los Angeles/Long Beach Labor Coalition • Mexican American Political Association • National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Carson/Torrance (NAACP) • Natural Resources Defense Council • Physicians for Social Responsibility • Progressive Christians Uniting • San Pedro Democratic Club • Sierra Club Harbor Vision Taskforce • Change to Win • L.A. County Federation of Labor • UNITE HERE Local 11 • UNITE HERE Local 681 • IAM Lodge 1484 • IBEW Local 11 • IBT Joint Council 42 • IBT Local 63 • IBT Local 495 • IBT Local 630 • Local 848 • IBT Local 952 • SEIU Local 1877 • Southern California Council of Laborers