

Tuesday | July 22, 2008

Serving Oakland for 134 years

Port pollution has powerful enemies

■ Dellums, L.A. mayor to march for environmentalist policies, worker rights

By Cecily Burt

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Oakland Mayor Ron Dellums and Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa will join a coalition of labor, environmental and community leaders today to push for policies at the Port of Oakland to reduce diesel emissions and boost living conditions for thousands of independent truckers who move goods to and from the West Oakland facility.

Pollution generated through rail, shipping and trucking operations at the Port of Oakland affects the entire region, but West Oakland residents, especially children, suffer disproportionately from asthma and other respiratory ailments possibly caused by diesel particulates from outdated rigs passing through the neighborhoods.

The Oakland Board of Port Commissioners set a goal this year of reducing the health risk from diesel particulates by 85 percent by 2020. The port has helped pay to replace 80 old trucks and it has set aside \$5 million this fiscal year to help retrofit 1,000 rigs with new filters,

If you go

■ 2 p.m. rally, Marriott Hotel, 1001 Broadway, followed by march to the Port of Oakland

said port spokesperson Marilyn Sandifur.

But many independent truckers say they barely scrape by after paying for gas, insurance and expenses, and cannot afford a new truck or costly filter upgrades, even if the port and other agencies pay half the cost.

The Coalition for Clean & Safe Ports, the

Teamsters and California Labor Federation, which is holding a two-day conference in Oakland, is urging the Port of Oakland to follow the lead set by the Port of Los Angeles and adopt a Clean Trucks Program policy.

Such a policy would dramatically reduce diesel emissions by requiring a concession agreement for all trucking firms serving the Port of Oakland to define environmental, community and labor standards. It also requires those trucking firms to hire drivers as employees, as was the case before the industry was deregulated.

See **PORT**, Page 5

Port

From Page 3

lated in the early 1980s. Under the policy, the trucking firms would be responsible for owning and maintaining a clean fleet of trucks, not the drivers.

Brian Beveridge, a West Oakland resident and co-director of the West Oakland Environmental Indicators Project, said he supports the proposed policy but wants to make sure

it includes a requirement for local hiring. He prefers a collection of small, local trucking companies rather than one or two huge conglomerates.

"It would be so much more exciting to me ... to have 100 small firms with 200 drivers," he said. "This is a workforce that needs a lot of assistance in moving from where they are now to moving to a successful small business."

The trucking industry has vowed to fight the policy at the Port of Los Angeles and

another at the Port of Long Beach, which allows truckers to operate as independent contractors if they adhere to much stricter emissions standards.

Oakland's port plans to hire a consultant to study the costs and impacts of the labor/employee model before it considers adopting a similar policy, Sandifur said.

Dellums' spokesman Paul Rose said the mayor supports that plan.

"The mayor believes that we do need a comprehensive

plan and policy that addresses environmental concerns in the community," Rose said. "And of course, we're keeping an eye on what's going on in L.A. The Port of Oakland hired a consultant to address those same concerns so when it's time to implement a plan in Oakland, we can move forward in the best way possible."

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