

latimes.com/news/local/la-me-freeway-protests14-2009nov14,0,693444.story

latimes.com

Protesting truckers snarl traffic on 710 Freeway and in downtown L.A.

Blasting their horns while driving past City Hall, more than 400 big-rig drivers try to draw attention to new environmental rules that they say threaten their livelihoods.

By Seema Mehta

November 14, 2009

Hundreds of protesting truck drivers slowed traffic Friday on the 710 Freeway and blasted their horns while driving past Los Angeles City Hall to draw attention to new environmental rules they say threaten their livelihoods.

"We all want to go green," said Sofia Quinones of the National Port Drivers Assn., which represents thousands of independent truckers. "But the devil is in the details."

More than 400 truckers protested new restrictions in the year-old Clean Truck Program, a pollution-reduction effort credited with cutting diesel truck emissions by 70% at the Port of Los Angeles and a similar amount at the Port of Long Beach.

Starting Jan. 1, all trucks built before 1994 will be barred from the ports, as will trucks built from 1994 to 2003 that have not been retrofitted to reduce emissions.

Retrofitting one truck can cost tens of thousands of dollars, and buying a new truck costs more than \$100,000.

Quinones said tens of millions of dollars in grants have been awarded to trucking companies to

help green their fleets, but none has been given to independent drivers who own their rigs.

The group is asking for an extension of the deadlines, grant funding and an investigation of the program, Quinones said.

Rallying outside City Hall, protesters directed much of their ire at Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, who has championed the Clean Truck Program.

They held signs that read, "Villaraigosa, Don't Tread on Me" and "NPDA Wants To Go Green. Help Us!"

William Gallarido, a 39-year-old driver, said that after paying expenses, he brings home a couple hundred dollars at most each week, and he needs an extension and financial help to retrofit his truck.

"I work very hard," the Los Angeles resident said. "I can't live on this."

Sarah Hamilton, a spokeswoman for the mayor, said this is why the plan calls for requiring independent drivers who work out of the Port of Los Angeles to join trucking companies that could cover such expenses.

The trucking industry is challenging this provision in the courts, saying it is aimed at unionizing independent truckers.

"We understand the concerns expressed by independent truck drivers who are currently being paid low wages and are not able to afford truck replacement or maintenance over time," Hamilton said.

seema.mehta@latimes.com

Copyright © 2009, [The Los Angeles Times](#)