

July 29, 2010

www.livingsocial.com

Ads by Google

[This is the print preview: Back to normal view »](#)**James P. Hoffa**

General President, International Brotherhood of Teamsters

Posted: July 29, 2010 11:08 AM

Put an End to Sweatshops on Wheels

Rep. Jerrold Nadler (D-N.Y.), along with the support of more than 50 colleagues in 15 states, are leading the effort to end the third world practices of our nation's ports by introducing the Clean Ports Act of 2010 today.

In today's issue of Politico, Sierra Club Chairman Carl Pope and I co-authored an op-ed on the importance of this bill to "green" America's blue collar workforce and eliminate the sweatshops on wheels.

The current system at our nation's trade hubs is broken. Thousands of port drivers across the country endure toxic fumes while operating heavy-duty container rigs for 12-15 hours a day for an average of \$10-11 an hour in take home pay. Lax regulation has allowed more than 5,500 port trucking companies to turn a hefty profit on the backs of a misclassified workforce. These companies manipulate the system, skirting tax laws by misclassifying the drivers as independent contractors.

These workers operate a fleet of out-dated, decrepit trucks because it is all they can afford on their meager wages. These trucks in turn spew toxic exhaust into the air everywhere they travel - including residential neighborhoods, past schools, along major highways and near hospitals. The EPA estimates 87 million Americans who live and work near ports are subjected to the preventable, costly and even fatal health consequences of diesel soot - asthma, cancer and heart disease.

The Los Angeles Clean Truck Program has been hailed as a true green solution that not only helped reduce emissions by 80 percent in and around the Port of Los Angeles by putting 6,600 clean diesel and alternative fuel vehicles in service, but gave thousands of drivers a real chance to make a livable wage - with most doubling their wages on average. Port-adjacent communities around the country have taken note of the environmental and public health accomplishments of the program, and of course wanted their local governments to replicate it.

The program even received a high recognition from the EPA for its forward-thinking vision. However, a successful lobbying effort by a Washington, D.C. lobby with connections to Big Oil has

led to a gutting of the program - leaving hard-working port drivers with expensive truck payments and operational overhead.

Rep. Nadler's legislation was crafted with the same vision as the LA Clean Truck Program and will enact real change in the port industry. The Clean Ports Act will accelerate the speed and success of clean fleet turnover plans at U.S. seaports, lower public health costs for taxpayers and help America's truck driver re-enter the ranks of the middle class.

The Clean Ports Act is the singular and simplest solution to 'green' this blue-collar workforce and eliminate the sweatshops on wheels that have plagued a critical U.S. industry for too long. Congress should look under the hood and fix the outdated federal laws that are stalling economic and environmental progress and put America's workers back on the road to recovery.

You can support this important legislation to bring real change to our environment and improve the lives of the thousands of people who live and work around our nation's ports by signing a petition being circulated by the Coalition for Clean & Safe Ports.

Follow James P. Hoffa on Twitter: www.twitter.com/TeamsterPower