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Contact: Barb Maynard, 213-387-0780

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Moving Forward on a Sustainable Pathway to Clean Air

A Statement by Patricia Castellanos, Chair of the Coalition for Clean & Safe Ports

While politics-as-usual corporate deal-making may still be the way to do business in Long Beach, make no mistake: The community will prevail and Long Beach Harbor Commissioners will not prevent the most dramatic-diesel emissions reduction program in LA history from being enacted in Southern California.

For over a year, thousands of environmentalists, port drivers, community residents, clergy, public health groups, labor leaders and others have united with public officials to enact the comprehensive and sustainable Clean Trucks Program introduced jointly both the LA and Long Beach Ports.

But under direction from Mayor Bob Foster, the Long Beach Harbor Commission took an abrupt wrong turn and departed from the twin Ports' shared roadmap, in order to ram through a scheme that even President Mario Cordero readily acknowledges needs significant work. In the meantime, the Port appears to be foolishly locking themselves into five year contracts with trucking companies, putting on hold its ability to truly break through the roadblocks that make this Port one of the largest sources of toxic air pollution in the region.

Goods movement in California is responsible for more deaths every year than homicides. Abandoning a critical clean-air partnership with the Port of Los Angeles is risky politics that puts more lives at risk. The Long Beach scheme is not green, and will fail to permanently clean our dirty, deadly air.

The Coalition for Clean & Safe Ports is encouraged that commissioners at the Port of Los Angeles, with the leadership of Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, are moving full speed ahead on a comprehensive, sustainable solution that will maximize deployment of the cleanest available trucks and permanently fix our broken port trucking system.

Taking leadership on this issue – not cover – will ensure that the days that the trucking companies and the big retailers like Wal-Mart, Target and Home Depot reap record profits absent of strong labor and environmental standards are numbered, a scenario that now stands in the way of much desired expansion.

Long Beach is not off the hook, and the Coalition is undeterred. If the destination is truly green growth, first we must first clear the pathway for good middle-class jobs and take bold action on the high road to clean air.

The real and strong Clean Trucks Program understands the link between port driver economics and the environment, and has been endorsed by Senators Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton, and over 30 other environmental, public health, community, labor and religious partners united in the Coalition for Clean & Safe Ports. Harbor commissioners must require that big industry -- not individual workers – is held accountable for halting deadly pollution now.

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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 • Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy • Los Angeles/Long Beach Labor Coalition • Mexican American Political Association • 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