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January 21, 2009

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
Chair, Subcommittee on Interior,
Environment and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington DC 20510

Dear Chairman Feinstein:

On behalf of the American Lung Association, I am writing to urge you to include \$1.5 billion for the diesel emissions reductions in the economic recovery package. Cleaning up particulate pollution from diesel trucks, buses and heavy equipment will help to reduce air pollution, improve public health and create thousands of jobs.

Diesel exhaust has been linked in numerous scientific studies to cancer, the exacerbation of asthma and other respiratory diseases. Dozens of studies link airborne fine particle, such as those in diesel exhaust, to increased hospital admissions for respiratory diseases, chronic obstructive lung disease, pneumonia, heart disease and tens of thousands of premature deaths annually in the US.

The health risks from diesel exposure are greatest for children, the elderly, people who have lung disease, cardiovascular diseases or diabetes, and people who work, exercise or live near diesel exhaust sources. Studies have shown that the proximity of a child's residence to major roads is linked to hospital admissions for asthma and to the ability of their lungs to grow to their full capacity. Other studies have identified potential risks for the onset of serious diseases. One study found a link between living near freeways and children developing asthma. Traffic exhaust and diesel exhaust have been linked to lung cancer in truck drivers and heavy equipment operators. A study published last November found higher risk of coronary heart disease and long-term exposure to traffic exhaust. These are just a few examples from among many that demonstrate the need to clean up the existing diesel engines.

Retrofitting diesel engines with modern pollution control equipment can reduce particle pollution emissions by 90 percent. It is our understanding that EPA has advised Congress that it has the capability to disburse \$1.5 billion expeditiously. We recognize that job creation is driving the economic recovery package. An independent economic analysis shows that \$1.5 billion in diesel emission reduction funding could save 39,000 to 50,000 jobs and generate \$6.8 billion to \$8.7 billion in additional economic output. Please support funding the diesel emission reduction program at \$1.5 billion. Cleaning up diesel is a winner for public health and the economy.

Sincerely,

Paul G. Billings
Vice President, National Policy & Advocacy