April 26, 2006

The Honorable Conrad Burns
Subcommittee on Interior and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Byron Dorgan
Subcommittee on Interior and Related Agencies
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Dear Chairman Burns and Ranking Member Dorgan:

As a uniquely broad coalition representing industry, state and local governmental agencies and environmental and health groups, we are writing to request your funding support in FY2007 for two important environmental programs. Specifically, we recommend that you 1) approve the President's request to provide $49.5 million for the Diesel Emission Reduction Program (DERA) and 2) appropriate $220.3 million for state and local air quality grants under the Clean Air Act, rather than cut these important grants by $35.1 million, as proposed in the President's FY2007 budget.

Diesel powered vehicles and equipment play an important part in the nation's economy and are getting cleaner every day. With consistent funding support from Congress in past years, the Administration has developed grant programs aimed at addressing emissions from diesel engines already in use and not affected by the emission standards that begin with model year 2007 engines.

Because diesel engines have a long life, the estimated 11 million diesel powered vehicles and equipment already in use will continue to operate for decades. The Diesel Emission Reduction Program (DERA), as authorized by the Energy Policy Act of 2005, is designed to provide significant emissions reductions from these existing engines. The President's budget calls for $49.5 million to be used for DERA, and combines three other successful clean diesel programs, including the recently authorized Clean School Bus grant Program, under the DERA umbrella.

This investment is needed and is fiscally responsible, yielding one of the greatest cost-benefit ratios of any federal program according to the Office of Management and Budget's calculations. It will go a long way toward helping states and localities meet the nation's new clean air standards by encouraging the use of cost-effective emissions reduction strategies. Furthermore, similar to existing federal and state programs, the federal contribution will likely be dwarfed by the funding leveraged from other sources.

Additionally, we request that you fund state and local air quality grants at the level appropriated in FY2006 – $220.3 million. The President's budget for FY2007 proposes cutting this funding by $35.1 million – which would represent a 16-percent decrease in these vital grants. State and local governments hold primary responsibility for preventing and controlling air pollution and rely on these grants to carry out their core obligations under the Clean Air Act, including monitoring air quality, assessing emissions impacts, developing comprehensive State Implementation Plans, permitting and inspecting sources, enforcing laws and regulations, and conducting public education and outreach. We further request that you continue to fund the fine particulate monitoring network under the authority of Section 103 of the Clean Air Act, rather than Section 105 as the President has proposed, so that states will not face the additional financial burden of having to provide matching funds.

At a time when already under-funded state and local air quality agencies face increasing responsibilities – including those related to attaining and maintaining National Ambient Air Quality Standards and addressing toxic air pollutants, grants to these agencies should not be cut nor should additional matching requirements be imposed.

The President's FY2007 budget includes a 16 percent, or $35.1 million, reduction in this program from the FY2006 level. We urge the restoration of funding to the FY2006 level of $220.3 million.

States, localities, environmental, health, user, and industry groups all support the President's requested funding for the DERA program because it is sound environmental, economic, and budgetary policy. Similarly these entities believe state and local air quality grants should be funded at the FY 2006 appropriated level of $220.3 million because these grants are vital to achieve and sustain clean, healthful air across the nation.

Sincerely,

American Bottoms Conservancy
American Lung Association
American Lung Association of Metropolitan Chicago
American Lung Association of New York State, Inc.
Association of Local Air Pollution Control Officials (ALAPCO)
Caterpillar Inc
Chicagoland Bicycle Federation
Citizen Action, Texas
Citizens Campaign for the Environment
Citizens for Pennsylvania's Future
Clean Air Task Force (CATF)
Clean Water Action, Connecticut
Clean Water Action, Massachusetts
Clean Water Action, Pennsylvania
Clean Water Action, Rhode Island
Corning Incorporated
Cummins Inc.
DaimlerChrysler Corporation
Detroit Diesel Corporation
Diesel Technology Forum (DTF)
Emissions Control Technology Association (ECTA)
Engelhard Corporation
Environment Northeast
Environmental Defense
Group Against Smog and Pollution
Health & Environmental Justice – St. Louis
Illinois Environmental Council
Illinois PIRG and Illinois PIRG Education Fund
International Truck and Engine Corporation
Johnson Matthey
Little Village Environmental Justice Organization
Mobile C.A.R.E Foundation
National School Transportation Association
Neighborhood Network
New Jersey Environmental Federation
NGK Automotive Ceramics USA, Inc.
Ohio Environmental Council
Pilsen Environmental Rights & Reform Organization
Prevention is the Cure, Inc. (Huntington, NY)

R.I.C.H.T.E.R. Foundation
Renewable Energy Long Island (RELI)
Southeast Environmental Task Force
Southern Alliance for Clean Energy
State and Territorial Air Pollution Program Administrators (STAPPA)
Sustainable Energy Alliance of Long Island
Umicore Autocat USA Inc.
Union of Concerned Scientists