



Students Take Idea to Statehouse

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When it's cold, some keep the engine running.

But a group of students say idling school buses make them sick.

"I get in the last bus so I'm standing there breathing in all those fumes and it smells really bad," said Mikala Osler a 7th grader from Browns River Middle School in Jericho.

Students from the Browns River Middle School came to the statehouse with a message, they want lawmakers to pass a law banning bus idling on school property.

"Your destroying our health environment and wasting money," said Adam Martin.

Using a conservative average of a bus idling for five minutes a day, the students say that wastes about 7.5 gallons of diesel fuel a year. Multiply that by the 1800 school buses in Vermont and the wasted fuel costs adds up, to over 36,000. The state backs up the numbers.

"By the time I am 21 the state will have wasted 243,000 gallons of fuel if this law is not passed," said Mikala Osler.

And it's not just economics, but environmental advocates say. The diesel fumes contribute to global warming.

But opponents say the kids need to be warm and retrofitting buses with interior heating systems can be costly, up to \$3200.

Ed Miller represents the Truck and Bus Association, "The fact is they need to idle longer then 30 seconds it's not just getting the engine warm. It's getting the windows clear and getting the bus to a comfortable temperature, an acceptable temperature inside."

But students say they know how to stay warm, by wearing winter clothes.

Currently it is up to each individual school to decide what if any policy they have on school bus idling. And with it being voluntary it is estimated that less then ten percent do have a policy.

"Since they are not doing it on their own it is going to require state intervention," said democratic Representative Rob Dostis.

Beyond school bus idling, lawmakers are also looking at bills to restrict warm up times on other vehicles, but the details are still being worked out.

"It got my attention and interest and it was great to have the students start the discussion," said Dostis.

After they were done the presentation, the students got a round of applause.

"It's fun talking on a state level," said Adam Martin.

The students say they know it can take a long time for a bill to pass the legislature, so they're also pursuing changes on a local level, and have presented their school board with the same plan.

[Kristin Carlson](#) - Channel 3 News

