

Rebecca Ryan, Director, Health Promotion and Public Policy  
American Lung Association  
In support of H-97, An Act Relating to the Idling of Motor Vehicles

Our reasons for backing this proposal are very simple: exposure to motor vehicle exhaust is unhealthy. This is especially true for diesel exhaust.

- Diesel exhaust is a mixture containing over 450 different components, including nitrogen oxides, volatile organic chemicals and particulate matter (PM). PM in particular is principally a diesel exhaust concern.
- PM comes in different sizes and the ones of most concern are tiny enough to lodge deep in the lungs where they can do serious damage. Particles of 2.5 microns in diameter are small enough to pass from the lung into the bloodstream just like oxygen molecules. By comparison, the diameter of the human hair is huge – at 70 microns.
- Dozens of studies link airborne PM, such as those in diesel exhaust, to increased hospital admissions for respiratory diseases including asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), pneumonia, heart disease and up to 60,000 premature deaths annually in the US.
- The United States Environmental Agency (EPA) has determined that diesel exhaust is a likely human carcinogen.

The American Lung Association supports a variety of actions to reduce air pollution and improve air quality. Air pollution even at low levels can pose serious health risks, especially for people with lung disease. Who is at greatest risk?

- Workers: analysis of over 30 studies of people who work around diesel equipment, including truck drivers, showed they were more likely to develop lung cancer than those who were not exposed to diesel emissions.
- Children: pound-for-pound they take in much more air than adults and have less developed lungs and immune systems. Asthma is the leading cause of school absenteeism due to chronic illness. Approximately 12,378 Vermont children have asthma.
- The elderly and people with respiratory disease, diabetes and heart disease.
- Currently there are approximately 45,329 Vermont adults with asthma, 21,669 with chronic bronchitis and 9,636 with emphysema.<sup>1</sup>

Our fossil fuel-based transportation system is the source of most of our air pollution. Although great strides have been and are being made to make our air healthier, research is uncovering that the health damage done by air

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<sup>1</sup> Estimated Prevalence of Lung Disease by Lung Association Territory, American Lung Association Epidemiology and Statistic Unit, Program and Research Services, July 2008

pollution occurs at lower and lower levels. In many cases these levels are what we used to believe to be safe. This is why it is so important to reduce vehicle exhaust and other toxic air emissions to the lowest levels possible.

Vermont, named once again the healthiest state in the country, is presently the only state in New England which has not adopted diesel truck idling legislation. It is good public health policy. It is good economic policy that makes even more sense, especially with unpredictable cost of fuel. According to EPA studies, long duration truck idling annually consumes more than one billion gallons of diesel fuel at considerable costs to the trucking industry. As a result, truck idling annually emits more than 11 million tons of carbon dioxide and more than 180,000 tons of nitrogen oxides, as well as fine particulate matter and other harmful air toxics.

As one more positive step forward in reducing pollution and assuring that the air we breathe doesn't cause or worsen lung disease, the American Lung Association urges you to pass H-97 this year.