UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

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OFFICE OF
AIR AND RADIATION

The Honorable Bernard Sanders
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Sanders:

Thank you for your letter of February 7, 2008, concerning passenger vehicle idling. I appreciate your interest.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) established the SmartWay Transport Partnership in 2004 to, among other things, reduce unnecessary engine idling. Our first area of focus is the heavy-duty truck and bus industry. Our initial evaluation of truck and bus idling resulted in finding that these diesel engines pose considerable risk to passengers and communities from emissions of nitrogen oxides and particulate matter. We are also concerned about the significant fuel consumption and carbon dioxide emissions from these idling trucks and buses.

As background, Federal law requires that truck drivers rest after driving a certain amount of hours, and during this rest period truck drivers often idle their engines to provide heat, air conditioning, or battery power to operate on-board appliances such as a refrigerator. The amount of time a truck driver idles their engine can be as high as 8-10 hours every night. Across the trucking industry, this can amount to millions of hours of idling. Consequently, these idling diesel engines warrant our immediate attention.

The SmartWay program embarked upon a broad initiative to reduce long duration truck idling. This initiative includes some of the following efforts: (1) testing trucks to determine the fuel consumption and emissions impacts during long-duration idling; (2) educating the trucking industry about these impacts and the alternatives to idling; (3) issuing over $6 million in grants to demonstrate the effectiveness of idle reduction technologies (e.g., auxiliary power units and truck stop electrification); (4) publishing State guidance on earning emission reduction credits for State-based efforts to reduce idling; (5) collaborating with States and the trucking industry to develop a model for a State idling law (only States can issue anti-idling laws); and (6) creating a low-cost loan program to assist truck owners with the purchase of idle reduction technologies.

As you mention in your letter, our School Bus USA launched a National Idle Reduction Campaign for school buses, including a do-it-yourself kit for schools to reduce idling. This program has achieved great success in reducing idling from school buses.

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Regarding passenger vehicle idling, we recently received information from concerned parties about remote-start technology. We understand that this technology may grow in popularity with car owners. We are concerned about the impacts associated with the overuse of remote start technology. Like truck and bus idling, we will approach passenger vehicle idling with a multi-prong approach. First, we are interested in evaluating the emissions and fuel consumption from passenger vehicle idling, and learning more about the potential impacts from wide use of remote-start technology. Second, we want to better understand the alternatives to passenger vehicle idling, including their costs and practicality of use. Third, we hope to work with the automobile manufacturers to present our findings and discuss ways we can work together to reduce unnecessary passenger vehicle idling.

Our efforts to address passenger vehicle idling are in the early stages. However, if we can apply our programmatic successes from reducing truck and bus idling to passenger vehicles, I feel confident that we can reduce unnecessary vehicle idling emissions and fuel consumption.

Again, thank you for your letter. If you have further questions, please contact me or your staff may call Diann Frantz, in EPA's Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Relations, at 202-564-3668.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Craig

for Robert J. Meyers
Principal Deputy Assistant Administrator