

## VERMONT 4-H YOUTH ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL SPEECH 11/7/9

*(distribute Idle-Free VT pamphlets and EPA New England document: What You Should Know About Truck Engine Idling)*

Hello.

I'm Wayne Michaud, of Bristol, director of Idle-Free VT, a grassroots, statewide campaign begun in 2006 to raise awareness of unnecessary vehicle idling—that's idling when parked. And secondarily to get more comprehensive idle-reduction legislation for Vermont. There is a wealth of information at [idlefreevt.org](http://idlefreevt.org), the website I maintain for this campaign. There are pages on Idling Facts, News around the state, local town efforts, schools, the legislature, idling in the business community, and a petition drive.

First I'd like to thank the Vermont 4-H Youth Environmental Council for choosing the issue of vehicle idling as your learning experience this fall.

Now I'll briefly touch on the reasons to avoid unnecessary idling as I know you've already heard some about it.

- 1) What folks like to hear most is saving money. Plain and simple, idling gets 0 miles to the gallon. Basically, the need to idle a light-duty vehicle boils down to 30 seconds. While there are a few exceptions, you only need 30 seconds to warm up an engine at a standstill, before driving slowly to moderately to complete the warm-up. And if you're in town or the school parking lot sitting in your parked car for longer than 30 seconds, you'll waste more fuel idling than shutting it off and restarting.
- 2) The most serious negative impact of idling is our health. The chemicals in even today's modern vehicles can affect our respiratory systems. And heavy-duty diesel engine idling compounds this problem.
- 3) The CO<sub>2</sub> emissions of idling contribute to global climate change. Idling when parked contributes to Vermont's disproportionately high transportation GHG emissions, which, based on a geographic calculation, are nearly double the national average.
- 4) Idling contributes to our dependence on foreign and Middle East oil which poses a threat to our economic and national security. Reducing idling conserves energy and can help make us more energy independent.
- 5) Idling causes needless engine wear. While engine damage in light-duty vehicles is negligible, according to several heavy-duty engine manufacturers, it increase maintenance and shortens the life of commercial diesel engines.
- 6) And in Vermont, we have a few laws that concern idling. School buses may not idle on school property, all vehicles may not idle while unattended in public and Burlington has an idling ordinance. In 2010, the Vermont legislature will debate a commercial diesel idling restriction bill. More on that soon...

I started the Idle-Free VT campaign kind of on a whim. First, I was learning about the peak oil theory—when world oil production comes to a peak, followed by a decline when demand exceeds supply. No one's really sure when that will occur. All we know is that there's a finite oil supply in the earth and

increasing world population places an ever increasing demand on oil. Second, while I was always careful with idling to conserve fuel, a tipping point in my psyche occurred when I observed people's vehicles idling for 5-10 minutes at the local Chittenden Solid Waste District recycling/disposal center. I complained to the CSWD about it and to my surprise, they implemented a no idling policy for their company vehicles along with no idling signs posted at all the dropoff centers. I was motivated by what one person could accomplish.

I studied existing idle-free campaigns on the Internet. I then started my campaign, first creating the [idlefreevt.org](http://idlefreevt.org) website. I started a petition drive. I wrote op-eds about idling that appeared in some newspapers. I slowly built a network of contacts. I got endorsements from other organizations. I learned to lobby legislators.

Soon I found myself in the midst of the school bus idling bill debate in 2007. With a coalition led by students, we helped get the bill passed. As a result, Vermont students are breathing healthier air and taxpayers are saving money from 1,800 school buses avoiding fuel waste.

The Idle-Free VT campaign has gone on to raise awareness of idling. With two volunteer partners, we ran Business Idle-Free, an initiative to educate the business community about unnecessary idling. The Dept. of Motor Vehicles agreed to educate Vermont motorists by offering Idle-Free VT literature in its six office locations. The Sierra Club, Vermont Chapter paid for the printing. The Idle-Free VT website has grown to nearly 3,000 visits a month. The campaign networks with and offers advice to campaigns in other states. And now, thanks to a grant from the Vermont Dept. of Environmental Conservation, a joint Idle-Free VT/American Lung Assoc. project called VERMONT IDLE-FREE FLEETS, will educate diesel fleet operated businesses in Chittenden and Rutland counties. I will be project coordinator, helping develop an information toolkit and making PowerPoint presentations to the businesses.

Which brings us back to truck idling and the legislature. Bill H.97--an act relating to the idling of motor vehicles in excess of 10,000 pounds, which are commercial, mostly diesel vehicles, will be debated. This bill was introduced last session by Rep. David Sharpe--as you know--and nine co-sponsors. The Committee on Natural Resources and Energy debated the bill, which included testimony from myself and an American Lung Assoc. representative. However, it did not get out of that committee as other bills took priority. But this session it is expected to go further and has a chance to pass. All the other 10 northeast states have already enacted forms of a diesel idling restriction law. Diesel fumes are the most toxic exhaust emissions so many people believe it makes sense to regulate them. H.97 restricts excessive idling only and contains reasonable exceptions for these vehicles to operate.

Now this is where you come in to the picture. Legislators are impressed by young people that speak passionately for a cause. As mentioned, it was the students of Browns River Middle School in Jericho who lobbied legislators and testified on behalf of the school bus idling bill in 2007. They knew their facts and led the way in persuading the legislators to pass the bill. Governor Douglas signed it into law. You too can be a significant player in convincing legislators to pass H.97 if you have the passion, know your facts and use all the convincing arguments available. It's your future and the air you will breathe. I wish you luck!

And finally, here's a 5 minute idling awareness video from the Connecticut Dept. of Environmental Protection, called Wastebusters, a take off on the Mythbusters TV program. You can also view it anytime through the Idle-Free VT website homepage.