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HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENERGY
H.97—AN ACT RELATING TO THE IDLING OF MOTOR VEHICLES
TESTIMONY OF WAYNE MICHAUD, DIRECTOR, IDLE-FREE VT AND A MEMBER OF THE
VERMONT COALITION TO REDUCE VEHICLE IDLING (VCRVI)

January 22, 2010

I am Wayne Michaud of Bristol, director of Idle-Free VT Inc, a grassroots campaign to raise awareness of unnecessary vehicle idling in Vermont. I am also a member of the Vermont Coalition to Reduce Vehicle Idling. I am testifying today in support of H.97.

So what is the big deal about parked vehicles that are idling? What is so bad about allowing a delivery truck to idle for 10-15-20 minutes? Eventually these vehicles go on their way and everything seems as it was before they parked and idled. But it isn't. Although you don't see it, harm has been done, some of it permanent. Anyone that was in the vicinity, including drivers in the cab, have been harmed by breathing the toxic emissions. There has been harm done to the engine, harm done to the company's profit margin, harm done to the environment, even harm done to America's security. There are approximately 31,000 diesel vehicles registered in Vermont. A significant number of them probably idle more than is necessary. The harm caused is not readily apparent like an accident, but it is having a negative impact on the quality of life of Vermonters. Now we have a chance to do the right thing. To make things better here in Vermont.

I want to make it clear that I am not against diesel engines and the trucking industry. Diesel engines are a durable and economical source of power, playing an important role in the transport of goods and our economy. I also recognize that there are some legitimate reasons why trucks need to idle while stationary. What we have to also recognize is that in many instances it is not necessary.

I find it pretty remarkable that all other states in the Northeast¹, including all of New England and New York, have enacted a diesel idling law, but not Vermont. Yet, I'm not advocating for one here just for the sake of another law. It's the compelling reasons I have touched on so far that have convinced the legislators of these 10 states to pass their diesel idling bills. Vermont should join them.

Before I expound on the reasons to avoid unnecessary idling, I would like to say that I am excited to be coordinator of the American Lung Association Vermont Idle-Free Fleets campaign to raise awareness of unnecessary idling among diesel fleet operators in Chittenden and Rutland counties. This year-long campaign's catch-phrase is: "Improve Our Air, Improve Your Profit." With our toolkit — which Committee members have previously received copies of — and PowerPoint presentation, we will show these companies that reducing idling is a win-win for everyone.

After getting into the myths and realities of idling, we will be telling fleet operators the compelling reasons to reduce idling:

- **Idling affects our air quality and health.** Diesel exhaust emissions contain 40 toxic components including nitrogen oxides, volatile organic compounds and particulate matter. Dozens of studies link these emissions to increased risk of premature death, lung cancer, heart attacks and asthma attacks, increased hospitalization visits, and slowed lung function growth in

children. Vermont has the 7th highest percentage of asthma in the U.S.²

- **Idling wastes fuel.** Idling gets 0 miles per gallon. A handful of Vermont fleet operators have already adopted idling reduction policies that save their companies significant sums of money. Green Mountain Coffee Roasters has reduced the idling of their 24 truck fleet from 28% of runtime to 3%, avoiding using nearly 7,000 gallons of fuel and saving more than \$20,000 annually. A great model nationally is UPS, which has practiced a no idling policy for decades. Recent company studies show that they save \$12,000,000 annually by reducing the idling of their 88,000 vehicle fleet.
- **Idling causes needless engine wear.** This leads to increased maintenance costs and shortened engine life. Engine manufacturers such as Kenworth, Caterpillar, and Cummins warn operators of heavy-duty diesels to limit engine warm up to 3 to 5 minutes and to limit idling in general when possible.³ EPA New England states, “Running an engine at low speed (idling) causes twice the wear on internal parts compared to driving at regular speeds. According to the American Trucking Association, such wear can increase maintenance costs by almost \$2,000 per year and shorten the life of the engine.”⁴
- **Idling contributes to global climate change.** While Vermont is overall the lowest carbon producing state in the U.S., the Governor’s Commission on Climate Change has determined that on a geographic basis, Vermont’s transportation greenhouse gas emissions are nearly double the U.S. average.⁵ And diesel idling is even higher proportionately in carbon emissions.
- **Idling wastes energy, posing a threat to our security.** The Obama administration Energy and Environment Agenda calls for an end to America’s addiction on foreign oil. Our dependence on foreign oil poses a threat to our economic and strategic security. According to EPA studies, long duration truck idling annually consumes more than one billion gallons of diesel fuel. Reducing this idling is part of the formula to help make Vermont and America more energy independent.

So these are very powerful reasons for simply having to turn off the key when possible.

Now I would like to share a recent story related to me by a member of my Idle-Free VT network, which illustrates a classic example of why we need a diesel idling law. Last December 30th, which was around 10 degrees that morning, this person pulled into the Wayside Restaurant in Berlin for breakfast. He noticed there were 4 to 5 FairPoint Communications trucks parked in the lot, idling away while unattended. As he came into the restaurant, the FairPoint drivers were lined up to leave. He confronted them, asking why their trucks were idling. They had no response. He complained to the company, explaining about “wasting gas, dirtying the air, polluting the environment and showing complete disregard for the local community and a lack of sound business practices”. A representative responded that the trucks were left running because they are “older Diesel construction vehicles (about 12 years old), and have to remain running, otherwise they will not start well outside of the protection of the garage”.

I share with the complainant FairPoint’s total disregard or lack of knowledge in this matter. I just cannot imagine the irresponsibility of leaving company trucks idling unattended in a public lot, which on top of all the other reasons not to idle, is in violation of Vermont’s Unattended Motor Vehicles law, placing these vehicles at risk of being stolen. Yet I have personally observed many times similar incidents of vehicles in parking lots, occupied or unattended, idling excessively. As to cold weather concerns, the experts tell us that diesel engines retain their warmth for a long time, and that as long as they are in the proper state of tune and use the proper winter blend, they would have no problem starting up after a driver’s 30 minute meal.

Our Vermont Idle-Free Fleets campaign will begin to dispel idling myths like this and others as we educate some fleet operators in two Vermont counties. And while this is a start, we have a long

way to go. Only a handful of medium- and heavy-duty fleet operators have adopted idling policies in Vermont. Education is important but education alone is not the full answer. For compliance, we need laws and enforcement to back up educational efforts. Three years ago, Sgt. Mike Roy of the Vermont State Police called me to talk about pending idling legislation. In discussing the challenges of enforcing idling laws, Sgt. Roy agreed that having a law behind an educational campaign can make the campaign more effective as he cited a personal story about an individual he knew that would never use a seat belt until becoming aware of the Click It or Ticket seat belt law. We would someday soon like to give fleet operators another reason not to idle — that there's a law restricting idling in Vermont.

I would like to close by commenting on the exemption language in the latest draft of H.97. I would like to reiterate the statement made to this committee by the Vermont Coalition to Reduce Vehicle Idling to remove the temperature exemption. The bill exemption structure should conform to the EPA Model State Idling Law⁶. This model was developed in consultation with the trucking industry. It does not include a temperature exemption as most tasks that need to be done (warming up and cooling down diesel engines, defrosting windshields, etc.) can be done in five minutes. In addition, Vermont's school bus idling law and Burlington's ordinance do not exempt vehicles in cold temperatures.

Thank you for allowing me to give testimony.

REFERENCES:

¹ATRI (American Transportation Research Institute) Compendium of Idling Regulations (January 2010)
http://www.atri-online.org/research/idling/ATRI_Idling_Compendium.pdf

²http://www.statemaster.com/graph/hea_ast_adu_cas-health-asthma-adult-cases

³"Crack Down on Idle Time" (Trucks & Transportation), Equipment Today Magazine, May 1, 2008 by Curt Bennink
<http://idlefreevt.org/Crack%20Down%20on%20Idle%20Time.pdf>

⁴"What You Should Know About Truck Engine Idling", EPA New England, April 2002
http://www.epa.gov/region1/eco/diesel/pdfs/Diesel_Factsheet_Truck_Idling.pdf

⁵Governor's Commission on Climate Change, page 44
<http://www.vtclimatechange.us/ewebeditpro/items/O123F9324.pdf>

⁶EPA Model State Idling Law
<http://www.epa.gov/smartway/documents/420s06001.pdf>