

# Clear the air in Monroe County; cut diesel soot emissions



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vironmental Protection Agency's acceptable cancer risk level of one in 1 million.

What we do about this problem is critical to the health of the people and environment of Monroe County.

The American Lung Association reports that deaths in New York state attributed to diesel soot emissions outpace those as a result of murder, AIDS or drunken driving. As a community we have gone to great lengths to fight these killers, yet have remained idle while New York leads the nation in death and disease associated with diesel soot.

Most diesel soot emissions come from cars, trucks and buses that use diesel fuel, but diesel soot also is produced by

many nonroad engines such as construction and agricultural equipment, locomotives and marine vehicles.

One major concern is idling school buses. Clearly, restrictions on these and other vehicles would go a long way toward reducing the health risk to our kids.

In addition to our local health concerns, diesel emission is a greenhouse gas that contributes to worldwide problems associated with global climate change.

New York City and Westchester County are among the communities that have recently put restrictions on diesel vehicles.

In Westchester County, it is now illegal to leave a diesel vehicle idling for more than three minutes. In addition, all vehicles

owned, leased or operated by the county must be powered by ultra-low-sulfur diesel fuel to reduce the emission of pollutants. This includes vehicles operated by companies working for the county.

New York City has initiated a program that will gradually require all city diesel vehicles to be powered by ultralow-sulfur diesel by July 2012. This measure was passed unanimously, 49-0, by the City Council. The average cost of retrofitting a vehicle using a diesel particulate filter is \$5,000. New vehicles purchased can come with the filter at no extra cost.

In Monroe County, it is essential that we enact similar emissions restrictions on our own diesel vehicles and school buses.

The safety of our children, our residents and our environment depends on it. Therefore, I have drafted a measure now before the Monroe County Legislature to do the following:

- Establish a law to restrict the idling of diesel motor vehicle engines in Monroe County to no longer than three consecutive minutes when the vehicle is not in motion. Exceptions would be granted for vehicles stopped in traffic, all emergency vehicles and when the temperature falls below 25 degrees Fahrenheit. The county would enforce the idling limit by imposing civil penalties enforceable by local police departments, while increasing public awareness of the idling limit.

- Require that by the year

2012, all county-owned, diesel-powered vehicles will utilize the best available retrofit technology or be equipped with an engine certified to the applicable 2007 EPA standard for particulate matter.

These are measures that we can all support regardless of whether we live in the city, towns or villages of Monroe County — the detrimental health effects of diesel soot know no bounds. These simple acts would reduce the rates of asthma, bronchitis, heart attacks and premature death across our area. And that should make us all breathe a little easier. □

*Heider, D-Brighton, represents the 14th District in the Monroe County Legislature.*

Excessive diesel soot emission is a critical environmental and public health problem in Monroe County.

Monroe is ranked 16th out of 62 counties in New York state and 568th of 3,109 counties nationwide for highest cancer risk from diesel soot, according to the American Lung Association. The average lifetime diesel soot cancer risk for a Monroe County resident is one in 4,348, or 230 times greater than the En-