

FEBRUARY 8, 2001.

Hon. CHRISTINE TODD WHITMAN,  
Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency,  
Washington, DC.

DEAR ADMINISTRATOR WHITMAN: We, the undersigned, represent an unusually diverse coalition of groups united in our strong support of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's December 21, 2000 final rulemaking that sets onroad heavy-duty diesel emission and fuel standards. Together, we write to you today to urge that this extremely important regulation be upheld, intact.

The rulemaking process that produced this regulation was not only extensive, it was thoughtful and inclusive. We are very pleased that the result is a comprehensive program that most responsibly takes full advantage of the opportunity to reduce a wide variety of diesel emissions by applying a systems approach that sets aggressive engine standards and, necessarily, a commensurately low cap on sulfur in diesel fuel. The framework established under this rule which includes a particulate matter standard of 0.01 grams per brake horsepower-hour (g/bhp-hr) to take full effect in 2007, a nitrogen oxide standard of 0.20 g/bhp-hr to be phased in between 2007 and 2010 and a national cap on sulfur in diesel fuel of 15 parts per million, to take effect June 1, 2006 represents a critical and delicate balance that will help enable the successful achievement of a 90-percent reduction in particulate matter emissions, a 95-percent reduction in nitrogen oxide emissions and a 97-percent reduction in levels of sulfur in highway diesel fuel. These reductions will translate into enormous public health and environmental benefits all across the nation.

We are proud to have contributed to the open process that led to this landmark rule and equally proud, and supportive, of the result. Each of us now looks forward to doing our respective part to implement the important programs that have been established, so that our nation can begin to reap the benefits on schedule. To this end, we urge you not to allow this rule to be delayed or, in any way, compromised. Rather, we look to you to ensure that the rule will be upheld, intact. In addition, we request an opportunity to meet with you at your earliest convenience to discuss the vital importance of this rule to our respective organizations.

Sincerely,

Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers; American Lung Association; Association of International Automobile Manufacturers; Association of Local Air Pollution Control Officials; California Trucking Association; Clean Air Network; International Truck and Engine Corporation; Manufacturers of Emission Controls Association; Natural Resources Defense Council; Northeast States for Coordinated Air Use Management; Sierra Club; State and Territorial Air Pollution Program Administrators; U.S. Public Interest Research Group; and Union of Concerned Scientists.

Mr. LIEBERMAN. Mr. President, I rise to express my concern regarding the possibility that the Bush administration will delay the effective date of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's December 21, 2000 final rulemaking that sets onroad heavy-duty diesel emission and fuel standards—also known as the diesel/sulfur rule.

This rule, the result of years of work and negotiations, would provide essen-

tial protections for the public health and the environment by drastically reducing emissions from diesel engines. It is sorely needed. Heavy-duty vehicles are significant contributors to elevated levels of ozone, fine particulate matter, and the primary emissions of several key toxic air pollutants, particularly in the Northeast. Together, highway and non-road heavy-duty engines are responsible for roughly 33 percent of all nitrogen oxide emissions, 75 percent of motor vehicle related PM, and 60 percent of aldehyde emissions in the northeast corridor. In addition to fouling our air, diesel exhaust has also been classified as a probable human carcinogen by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), the International Agency for Research of Cancer and the US EPA.

This rule will greatly reduce the health and environmental risks resulting from these pollutants, with a projected 90-percent reduction in particulate matter emissions, a 95-percent reduction in nitrogen oxide emissions and a 97-percent reduction in levels of sulfur in highway diesel fuel. In particular, the rule would bring badly needed relief to my home state of Connecticut, and to the Northeast in general, which need to drastically reduce both nitrogen oxides and volatile organic compounds in order to fulfill the requirements of their state implementation plans.

In light of the environmental and health benefits of the rule, I would be troubled if the administration were to consider modifying the rule without providing the essential due process and thoughtful consideration required by the Administrative Procedure Act. The effective date of a rule is an integral part of the rule, and the Administration must not cut corners when considering changing that date. Legal requirements aside, I think it is critical for the Administration to consider the voices of the public—whose health and environment are at stake with this rule-making as well as the affected industry before changing the effective date or instituting any other changes to the rule.

In that vein, Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to submit the attached letter to be printed in the RECORD, signed by a broad coalition of industry, public interest groups, and regulators, which calls upon US EPA Administrator to implement the diesel/sulfur rule without delay or alteration.

There being no objection, the letter was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

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#### RESTORING THE MINIMUM WAGE

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Mr. President, today I rise to voice my support of Senator KENNEDY's effort to restore the minimum wage. The Fair Minimum Wage Act of 2001 would raise the minimum wage by \$1.50 in three incremental steps, benefitting over 11 million workers. We owe a pay raise to the hard-working Americans who would be affected by a minimum wage increase. To do so would demonstrate the real value of their hard work.

Care givers in our preschools and nursing homes, service workers in our retail and restaurant industries, the domestic workers in our homes and offices—these are the real people upon

whom each of us relies every day. These are the workers who deserve to have their wages restored to a level that will afford them a reasonable standard of living.

In West Virginia alone, over one-fifth of our workers will directly benefit from a \$1.50 increase in the minimum hourly wage. This would mean an increase of almost \$3,000 a year for full-time workers. In more concrete terms, this translates into more than a year of groceries, rent for seven months, seventeen months of utility bills, or a year of tuition at a two-year college. Currently, a full-time minimum wage earner with two children may be faced with difficult decisions when trying to both feed and clothe her children. We need to make sure that a mother or father who works forty hours a week does not have to decide between groceries for the family and paying the electric bill.

Ultimately, we must acknowledge that the minimum wage standard has been allowed to slowly erode over the past thirty years. At present, the \$5.15 hourly minimum has reached its lowest purchasing power in two decades, which has aggravated problems for the working poor. Today, the real value of the minimum wage is \$2.90 below what it was in 1968. As our country continues to make unprecedented economic gains, this is simply unacceptable. We have an obligation to the working families in West Virginia, and across the Nation, to raise the minimum wage to a level that will lift them out of the day-to-day struggle of meeting their most basic needs.

I believe that raising the minimum wage over the next two years is essential to help families and to reinforce the fundamental American values of hard work and self-sufficiency. The goal of the country's minimum wage is to ensure that working Americans earn a living wage that makes work a truly better choice than welfare or other public assistance. The fact that 70 percent of workers earning minimum wage are adults over the age of twenty, that 60 percent are women, and that nearly half have full-time jobs means that this is an issue central to millions of hard-working families in our country. In West Virginia alone, almost 14 percent of our work force earn at the minimum wage, and our state has one of the largest populations of workers receiving the minimum wage. I am proud to join Senator KENNEDY and my colleagues to work together to enact this essential bill for working Americans.

#### HIGH SCHOOL SHOOTING

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, last Friday, at least one gunshot was fired at Detroit's Osborn High School. The gunshot hit a classroom window and two students and a teacher were injured as glass shattered across the room. Al-

though the shooting produced no substantial physical injuries, it created great anxiety for the students and families of Osborn High School, who no doubt will sustain the emotional injuries of such a shooting for some time.

The students and teachers at Osborn High School are not alone in their anxiety. Around the nation, students and their families are seriously concerned about safety in their schools. Students deserve to feel safe in their learning environments rather than feeling anxious and fearful. For the students at Osborn High School and everywhere else in America, Congress must work to limit the accessibility that young people have to guns, and reduce the gun violence in our schools and community places.

#### THE SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS TAX RELIEF ACT 2001

Mr. HUTCHINSON. Mr. President, last week I introduced legislation which I hope is the first of several steps taken by Congress to correct a terrible injustice currently imposed on seniors who have worked hard all of their lives and are receiving Social Security benefits.

Many people do not realize that, after they have paid Social Security taxes throughout their work careers, up to 50 percent or 85 percent of the monthly benefit they receive from Social Security may be taxed again.

Prior to 1993, up to 50 percent of Social Security benefits were taxable for individuals with incomes above \$25,000, and couples with incomes above \$32,000. In 1993, after President Clinton raised the portion of Social Security benefits which are taxable up to 85 percent for individuals with incomes over \$34,000, and couples with income over \$44,000.

President Clinton's 1993 tax increase on senior citizens made a bad policy even worse. Essentially, this graduated tax scheme penalizes seniors with fixed incomes who have worked hard to ensure their retirement security.

S. 237, the Social Security Benefits Tax Relief Act, which I have introduced along with my colleagues, Senators COCHRAN, FRIST, INHOFE, LOTT, MURKOWSKI and WARNER, would repeal the 1993 Clinton tax increase on Social Security benefits and rolls the tax levels back to their pre-1993 levels.

By eliminating the taxation of Social Security benefits, we will allow seniors to have more money to pay for prescription drugs, medical care, housing and food. This legislation provides greater tax fairness for increasing numbers of middle-income seniors.

It is widely agreed that Social Security was never intended to be the sole source of income for retirees. In light of Social Security's financial troubles, now is the time to remove disincentives for those who wish to save and plan early for their retirement. Hope-

fully, this legislation is a first step toward the repeal of all taxes on Social Security benefits.

I urge my colleagues in the Senate to provide tax relief to seniors by passing this important legislation and by examining ways to make the system as fair as possible for all beneficiaries who have paid into the system and who may or may not be subject to taxes on their benefits.

#### LITHUANIAN INDEPENDENCE

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, on Sunday, February 11, 2001, Americans of Lithuanian descent will be gathering, in my home State of Michigan, to celebrate the 83rd anniversary of Lithuanian Independence.

Given the Lithuanian people's long history of successfully preserving and maintaining their culture and identity, there is reason for all those of Lithuanian descent to be proud. Such an achievement stands as an inspiration for people everywhere.

The Lithuanian people have long refused to be placed under the yoke of oppression. They became independent in 1918, fought the Nazis during the Second World War and refused to lose hope during many years of Soviet rule. Reflecting on these trials can be cause for great sadness but also much hope.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Lithuania has experienced nearly eleven years of democracy and free markets. The Lithuanian people are to be commended for the significant steps they taken to ensure Lithuania's place in the free world. In 1999, I had the opportunity to meet with President Valdas Adamkus, and discuss many issues facing both our nations. Many of my colleagues may not know this, but so great is President Adamkus' love for his ancestral homeland that he returned to Lithuania to run for President after a successful career in the United States, including service as an official in the States Environmental Protection Agency.

In its efforts to reform, Lithuania has placed a premium on joining the European Union, EU, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, NATO. Sound monetary policy and a stable currency have given Lithuania the framework for economic growth and prosperity. On the security front, Lithuania was the first member of the former Soviet Union to participate in the Partnership for Peace. The Partnership for Peace is an important program where the United States and its NATO allies work with former Warsaw Pact nations on common security measures.

At this time when we honor Lithuania's independence, it is only fitting that we laud the extraordinary advances made by the Lithuanian people. I know my Senate colleagues join me in saluting the Lithuanian people for