

**STATE CAPITOL**

Room 3098  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
916.319-2032  
916.319-2132 fax

**Assembly  
California Legislature**

**JEAN FULLER**  
Assemblymember, 32<sup>nd</sup> District

**DISTRICT OFFICE**

4900 California Ave, 100-B  
Bakersfield, CA 93309  
661.395-2995  
661.395-3883 fax

March 24, 2008

Mary D. Nichols, Chair  
California Air Resources Board  
1001 I Street,  
Sacramento, California 95814

**Regarding: March 27 Board Meeting  
Agenda Item 08-3-4 School Bus Guidelines**

Dear Chair Mary Nichols:

On behalf of the Rural Caucus, we appreciate the opportunity to discuss this important program. The California State Legislative Rural Caucus is made up of 42 voting members of the Legislature and includes Assemblymember, Senators, Republicans and Democrats. The Rural Caucus serves as a voice for rural communities.

As members of the Rural Caucus we have grave concerns with the proposed distribution of the \$200 million from Proposition 1B for the replacement of school buses and the installation of traps. The proposed actions have the potential to severely hurt rural school districts, which already face hardships in the area of transportation.

- Rural counties must bus more students for longer distances. The following are a few examples: Kern County (32% of their students) Nevada (49%), Inyo (54%), Trinity (57%), Mariposa (74%), and Amador (77%).
- Unequal burden for rural counties. In Kern County, schools in 2005 spent \$34 million for transportation but only received \$14 million from the state. The deficit was \$124 per student. For rural districts in Kern, the deficit was \$154 per child. These districts must transport 50% of their children. The state contribution is only 41%.

The school bus guidelines ARB staff is proposing will further increase costs to rural areas, therefore we are extremely opposed to the staff's proposal for a school district match of \$25,000. There was nothing in the voter-approved proposition or in the enabling legislation that gave ARB the authority to require such a match. If ARB wants to require a match, ARB should have introduced legislation to get that authority.



We would also like to point out that because of the seat belt requirements, school districts will no longer be able to seat three children to a seat. Many rural school districts seat three children to a seat in order to minimize costs. These school districts will have to purchase a new school bus and hire a new driver, if one can be found, if they are able to replace two school buses. Their actual 'match' will exceed \$200,000 or \$100,000 per replacement school bus.

We are also opposed to the unrealistic state cost cap of \$140,000 per school bus. This will mean that those school districts that want to purchase a CNG school bus will have to pay a 'match' of \$30,000 to \$45,000. With the exception of the South Coast air quality district, which mandates CNG school buses, this will have the unintended consequence of causing school districts to purchase diesel school buses because of the lower school district match. It will also cause school districts to purchase 'fully loaded' diesel school buses up to \$165,000 (state share of \$140,000 plus school district match of \$25,000). The Rural Caucus has no problems with reasonable cost caps that reflect the actual cost of school buses. We would recommend that ARB give that authority to the local air quality districts and have them create reasonable cost caps based on the most recent school bus purchases by the school districts in their air quality district.

Finally, we would propose that ARB recommend to the air quality districts that at least 75% of the Proposition 1B funds be used for school bus replacement. Because of the lack of funding, our school districts have one of the oldest school bus fleets in the nation. These funds will replace school buses that on the average were built more than thirty years ago. The California State Department of Education has stated that school buses should be replaced before fifteen years of service.

Our school transportation programs are severely underfunded. The imposition of a \$25,000 match will mean that many of our school districts will not be able to replace their old school buses. We urge you to consider the impact that the proposed guidelines will have on rural areas and ask that you not approve the staff's proposed guidelines on Agenda Item 08-3-4 School Bus Guidelines.

If you have any questions please contact the Rural Caucus Staff Director, Jennifer Franklin, at 319-2032 or [jennifer.franklin@asm.ca.gov](mailto:jennifer.franklin@asm.ca.gov)

Sincerely,

JEAN FULLER  
Assemblymember, 32<sup>nd</sup> District  
Chair, Rural Caucus

TOM BERRYHILL  
Assemblymember, 25<sup>th</sup> District  
Secretary, Rural Caucus



ORIGINAL: Board Clerk  
Copies: Executive Officer  
Chair



Paul Cook  
sign

[Signature]  
sign

[Signature]  
sign

[Signature]  
sign

[Signature]  
sign

[Signature]  
sign

Patty Berg  
sign

[Signature]  
sign

[Signature]  
sign

Rick Keene  
sign

John J. Benoit  
sign

Sharon Runner  
sign

Juan Arambula  
sign

Paul Cook  
print

Jeff Denham  
print

Roy Ashburn  
print

DAVE COX  
print

Alan Nakanishi  
print

Doug LaMalfa  
print

Patty Berg  
print

Abel Maldonado  
print

GREG ARMSTRONG  
print

Rick Keene  
print

John J. Benoit  
print

Sharon Runner  
print

Juan Arambula  
print

*Samuel Aantel*

sign

sign

sign

sign

sign

*Sam Aantestad*

print

print

print

print

print