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Dept. of Environment and  
Natural Resources  
Secretary's Office

24 March 2017

The Honorable Steven M. Pirner  
Secretary  
South Dakota Department of Environment & Natural Resources  
523 E Capitol  
Pierre, SD 57501

Dear Secretary Pirner,

I write to encourage you to include the renewal and replacement of diesel school buses and heavy-duty trucks when the State of South Dakota prepares and submits its Beneficiary Mitigation Plan to the Trustee overseeing the Volkswagen Consent Decree. The \$7.5 million South Dakota is scheduled to receive for diesel mitigation activities represents a tremendous opportunity to protect the environment and improve air quality across the state.

The terms of the settlement allow South Dakota to seek and receive reimbursement of 100% of the purchase price of new, clean diesel-powered buses and heavy-duty trucks if they replace older, diesel powered vehicles purchased prior to 2007. Leveraging those generous terms would permit the state to renew the aging fleet of buses that transport tens of thousands of students, daily, to schools across South Dakota. Providing safe transport powered by the diesel engines that meet or exceed the EPA's most stringent standards would benefit our state's most vulnerable population.

Heavy-duty diesel trucks perform a myriad of critical municipal services, from hauling garbage to spreading salt and building infrastructure. Yet, budget realities mean that fleet renewal is perennially low on the list of priorities. Replacing the typically ancient trucks that keep our communities running with new, more capable and environmentally friendly trucks would benefit all taxpayers. And, since new trucks emit a tiny fraction of the pollutants produced by pre-2007 models, the measurable environmental benefits would be significant.

I further counsel you to resist the pitch of those who would have you invest the windfall in the purchase of a fleet of expensive and unproven electric vehicles. While electric vehicles offer the illusion of environmental benefit, they merely shift the source of their emissions. They lack the decades-old, rock-solid record of dependability that diesel-powered trucks and buses have earned. And the need to dispose of the short-lived, toxic batteries that power electric vehicles guarantees the emergence of another environmental challenge in the not-too-distant future.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I'm confident you will shape a diesel mitigation plan that demonstrably improves South Dakota's air quality in a manner that makes prudent use of scarce resources. I look forward to the benefit of your reply.

Sincerely,

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