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For Immediate Release
September 30, 2008

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Governor Fails California Vetoes Port Investment Bill

Sacramento – The Governor vetoed, SB 974, the port investment bill today. The bill, a product of several years of work by State Senator Alan Lowenthal (D-Long Beach), enjoyed support from numerous cities, health and environmental organizations, labor organizations, and business groups.

The bill would have provided a key funding source to reduce the toxic pollution caused by the movement of cargo to and from the ports of Long Beach, Los Angeles and Oakland and also would have provided needed funding for infrastructure near and at those ports.

“I am extremely disappointed with the Governor’s decision. This is a sad day for California.” said Lowenthal. “There is a dark cloud over our heads and that dark cloud is cancer. The Governor could have shrunken or eliminated that cloud, but choose to side with out of state corporate executives instead.”

SB 974 would have levied a \$30 per container user fee on each twenty-foot shipping container processed at the ports of Los Angeles, Long Beach and Oakland. Revenue from the user fee would have gone towards improving the infrastructure that moves containers to and from the ports and to reduce the pollution generated by the movement of containers to and from the ports.

The Ports of Los Angeles, Long Beach and Oakland are the first, second and fourth largest container ports in the country and account for just under 50% of all imports into the United States. Orange County, Riverside County, San Bernardino County and Los Angeles County are severely impacted by the hundreds of trains moving containers through their communities, and the funds from **SB 974** would have gone towards building grade separations throughout Southern California, which reduce pollution and congestion and improve public safety.

“Pollution from international goods movement is causing a health crisis in California and the federal government is not going to bail us out. We need to stand up and fight this ourselves and hopefully, some day, we’ll have a Governor that will fight for California as well.” stated Senator Lowenthal.

The California Air Resources Board estimates 3,700 deaths a year are directly attributed to diesel pollution emanating from goods movement. That is in addition to the \$200 billion in additional health care costs that CARB attributes to goods movement over the next 15 years.

“I held off on this bill last year at the request of Governor Schwarzenegger, and spent the whole year working with his office. Unfortunately the pressure from Governor Palin and multi-national corporations was too much for him and the Governor chose those interests over the health and well-being of Californians,” concluded Lowenthal.

Lowenthal has no intention of re-introducing the legislation next year.

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