

## Fighting for air

By Kristopher Hanson, Staff writer  
Long Beach Press Telegram

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**Video:** [Sen. Barbara Boxer introduces bill to clean up port pollution](#)

**Photos:** [Port hearing](#)

SAN PEDRO - Mayor Bob Foster told a congressional committee Thursday that local residents are getting sick because of the federal government's unwillingness to help curb air pollution from port industry.

The mayor spoke at a hearing convened by Sen. Barbara Boxer, D-Calif., who recently introduced a bill aimed at cleaning up emissions from ships in all U.S. ports.

Foster directly blamed the Environmental Protection Agency for stalling regulations that would lower emissions in and around America's ports, including Long Beach-Los Angeles, the nation's largest.

"I sat with the EPA and they said it could take five more years" to implement changes, Foster testified. "I don't know how many premature deaths and how many heart disease and asthma cases that is but, quite frankly, one is too much."

Foster was referring to the EPA's decision earlier this year to delay action on marine vessel emissions.

A top regional employer, the ports are listed as the single largest fixed source of air pollution in the Los Angeles Basin - emitting an estimated 48 tons per day of smog-forming nitrogen oxides (NOx).

According to the South Coast Air Quality Management District, ships spew more than 30 tons of toxic sulfur oxides into the air daily - more than all the cars, trucks, airplanes, power plants and oil refineries in the Los Angeles Basin combined.

Boxer's bill, S1499, would dramatically reduce the sulfur content of fuel used by marine vessels in all U.S. seaports beginning in 2010. Sulfur oxide emissions have been linked to smog and health impacts on humans.

Introduced in May, Boxer's bill is currently under consideration on Capitol Hill. A similar bill was introduced in the House of Representatives by Rep. Hilda Solis, D-El Monte.

Currently, most large cargo ships burn a low-grade diesel known as bunker fuel, which contains sulfur content as high as 27,000 parts-per-million. The bill would lower that to 1,000 parts- per-million.

By comparison, cars and trucks in the U.S., by law, can burn diesel fuel with sulfur content no higher than 15 parts-per-million.

"It's our duty to protect the health of our children, people with asthma and all the people of this community from ship and port pollution," Boxer said. "Oceangoing ships are subject to international standards, but these standards require virtually no control. And our own federal government has yet to step up to the task of requiring these large polluters to make significant emission reductions."

The shipping industry supports international emission standards and has been pushing for a world maritime treaty to address the issue, but said patchwork regulations are not effective.

"What we would like is uniformity and consistency, and an international treaty would support those goals," said John McLaurin, president of the Pacific Merchant Shipping Association (PMSA), a San Francisco-based trade group representing international shippers.

McLaurin said the industry was studying new, cleaner-burning fuels for cargo ships and has pledged to use dockside electricity where available at berths in Long Beach and Los Angeles.

Health studies link air pollution around San Pedro Bay to increased cancer, respiratory and heart disease risks, with particulate matter from diesel emissions blamed for a growing number of illnesses.

The port complex, which has doubled volume in recent years, is expected to double or triple again by 2025, leading to worries that health problems will grow accordingly.