



CLEAN BUSES FOR HEALTHY NIÑOS

Children and Communities Have
a Right to Breathe Clean Air

Children and communities have a right to breathe clean air. Yet more than 25 million children ride dirty diesel school buses each day in the United States, facing exposure to dangerous toxins that can cause asthma, heart and lung disease, and cancer.

In 2017, Chispa, an organizing program of the League of Conservation Voters (LCV), launched the *Clean Buses for Healthy Niños* campaign to call on governors and state and local decision makers to put the health of children and families first by using funds from the Volkswagen (VW) settlement to finance zero-emission, electric school buses.¹



Chispa is LCV's organizing program to elevate the voices and leadership of Latinx communities in the fight to stop climate change and advance a just and equitable clean energy future. With increasingly powerful organizing programs in Arizona, Colorado, Connecticut, Maryland, and Nevada, Chispa has had a major impact in a few years by growing LCV's online Latinx membership to 280,000 people, engaging more than 6,000 volunteers, and training hundreds of promotores—local leaders who organize in their neighborhoods, schools, and churches.

Across the country, Chispa and LCV's state affiliates are fighting to get the VW settlement and other funds invested in our communities and school districts. Clean buses are particularly important for low-income communities and communities of color, where students and families are most at risk from breathing dirty air and disproportionately suffer the effects of diesel pollution.



¹ In 2016, VW agreed to pay a total of \$4.7 billion dollars for cheating federal emissions tests. Of this, \$2.7 billion was distributed to states for projects to promote clean air and mitigate the effects of diesel pollution.

CAMPAIGN PROGRESS



Chispa began developing the *Clean Buses for Healthy Niños* campaign in 2016, recruiting 22 partner groups and organizing in six states. We officially launched the campaign in 2017, and that fall, delivered over 31,000 petition signatures to governors in **Arizona, Colorado, Connecticut, Nevada, New Mexico, and Maryland** urging them to use VW settlement funds to invest in electric school buses. In 2018, the campaign expanded to **Florida and New York**.

Throughout 2017 and 2018, Chispa organizers and promoters engaged thousands of students, parents, and volunteers to demand that governors and their administrations prioritize children's health by directing VW settlement money towards the purchase of electric, zero-emission school buses. This pressure began to generate local victories when the school board in New Haven, Connecticut and the Prince George's County Council in Maryland passed resolutions calling for dedicated funding for electric school buses.

By late 2018, several states had released plans allocating millions of dollars to **replace or update** diesel school buses, though often not yet specifying electric. This included \$38 million in Arizona to update school buses in districts where most students receive free or reduced lunch; \$52 million to replace buses in New York, with a funding priority for environmental-justice communities; and millions more in states including Connecticut, Colorado, Maryland, Nevada, and New Mexico.

In 2019, momentum built by the *Clean Buses for Healthy Niños* campaign led state and local leaders to make the critical leap of **specifically committing** VW settlement and other funds to transition diesel school buses **to zero-emission, electric models**:

IN ARIZONA, the Phoenix Union High School District Governing Board unanimously approved an electric school bus pilot program. This first-of-its-kind program will impact the state's largest high school district, where approximately 80 percent of students are Latinx.

IN MARYLAND, Governor Hogan signed bipartisan legislation to create a grant program for school districts to adopt zero-emission school bus fleets.

IN NEVADA, Governor Sisolak signed legislation to fund incentives for school districts to transition to electric buses—a big win in a session that also expanded access to solar power for low-income families and saw the passage of a statewide 50 percent renewable energy standard.



Governor Sisolak signing Nevada legislation.

The legislation “is a step in the right direction towards a cleaner energy future for our children.”

—Nevada Governor Sisolak at the bill signing

IN NEW YORK, advocacy by our state LCV helped win approval by the New York City Department of Education to pilot four electric school buses in fall 2019.

The campaign's victories are fueling progress in other states, and our partners throughout the Conservation Voter Movement have won additional investments in clean buses:

IN CALIFORNIA, the state legislature approved spending \$180 million of the proceeds from the state's cap-and-trade system on vouchers for hybrid or zero-emission trucks and buses. Another \$100 million will go to a program that replaces old school buses. A fleet of all-electric school buses has grown to 150 throughout the state.

IN ILLINOIS, our state LCV helped secure \$10 million to fund electric school buses and an additional \$10 million for electric vehicle infrastructure.

IN MICHIGAN, \$13 million or 20 percent of the state's VW settlement funds were allocated to school buses and other heavy- and medium-duty vehicles, including \$4 million specifically to purchase electric school buses.

IN MASSACHUSETTS, the state allocated \$1.4 million in grants to start an electric school bus pilot program as the *Clean Buses for Healthy Niños* campaign launched.

IN NEW JERSEY, Governor Murphy established a statewide electric vehicle program to put 330,000 zero-emission vehicles on the road by 2025. New Jersey will also use a portion of its VW settlement funds to electrify school buses in Trenton.

IN OHIO, the state's VW mitigation plan committed \$3 million to invest in electric school bus pilot projects.

IN WASHINGTON, the state's VW mitigation plan allocated up to 45 percent of its \$112.7 million to invest in retrofitting or replacing school buses, with electric buses prioritized.



Our children deserve to breathe clean air. Dirty diesel buses shouldn't endanger kids in their pursuit of an education. It's time to fund a **#CleanRide4Kids**.

MOVING FORWARD

These victories show how low-income communities and communities of color, who are most directly harmed by dirty energy, can win action from state and local governments to invest in fossil fuel-free technologies that clean up the air we breathe.

In partnership with state LCVs and other groups across the country, the *Clean Buses for Healthy Niños* campaign will continue to push state, local, and federal decision makers to dedicate funding for school districts to invest in electric buses. Whether we use VW funds, federal or private grants, or utility and other partnerships, we must transition to zero-emission vehicles that won't put the health of our children at risk and that will build a clean, healthy future for all our communities.

We remain committed to ensuring that low-income and communities of color are prioritized in this transition and to activating people across the country to organize to build their political power and protect their rights to clean air and water, healthy neighborhoods, and a safe climate for generations to come.




In 2019, federal legislation was introduced in Congress to provide \$1 billion in grants to states to electrify their school bus fleets within the next five years. Shaped by years of advocacy by Chispa and our coalition partners, the Clean School Bus Act prioritizes investing in clean buses in low-income communities most affected by air pollution.

THANK YOU

Thank you for your interest in the work of LCV, Chispa, and the *Clean Buses for Healthy Niños* campaign. This progress is possible because people like you are putting their voices and resources behind solutions that reject dirty fossil fuels, clean up our air, and tackle climate change. The movement to build a 100 percent clean energy future for all continues to grow. **Join Us.**

Connect with the campaign

www.cleanride4kids.org

 @ChispaLCV
#CleanRide4Kids

Our goal is to push state, local and federal lawmakers to take decisive action to eliminate diesel school bus pollution and offer a #CleanRide4Kids.



For more information or to get involved, visit www.lcv.org
740 15th Street NW, Suite 700 Washington, DC 20005 | 202.785.8683