



Support for the NYC Citizens Air Complaint Program

The Current Program Is Successful; Don't Fix What Is Not Broken

The [Citizens Air Complaint Program](#) is the City's program to empower ordinary citizens to help stop air pollution by reporting a range of violations, but especially illegal idling by trucks and buses. The program enables everyday New Yorkers to submit videos from their cell phones of idling trucks and buses to the Department of Environmental Protection. In New York City, it's illegal for any motor vehicle to unnecessarily idle its engine for more than 3 minutes, or for more than 1 minute adjacent to a school or park. The program's biggest innovation is incentivizing the general public to help with enforcement by sharing 25% of the fine collected by the City with people who document idling violations.

The incentive program is widely admired as an example of smart public policy and was the inspiration [for a NYS Senate bill](#) enabling bystanders to report illegal or covered license plates supported by four NYC based senators who said it was "modeled after New York City's highly successful Citizens Air Complaint Program."

We agree and think the public incentive program has worked extremely well. The public documented 160,000 idling violations in 2025 and in total the public has generated \$145 million in idling fines for the City – [including \\$9 million from Amazon alone in May 2026](#). Thanks to idling enforcement by everyday New Yorkers, many companies' trucks and buses now comply with the law. There is still non-compliance, but idling has dropped dramatically since civilians were empowered to clean up the air.

There is no dispute that idling is – and should be – illegal in NYC and we are glad the Citizens Air Complaint Program has massively increased enforcement of that law. [Idling cars and trucks in New York City produce an estimated 130,000 tons of carbon dioxide annually. Offsetting that would require planting new trees over an area the size of](#)

[Manhattan every single year](#). Engine emissions contribute to air pollution that prematurely kills 3,200 New Yorkers a [year](#) and the [asthma suffered by 909,000 New Yorkers, including in hard hit Environmental Justice Communities like the South Bronx](#). Before the Citizens Air Complaint Program, New York City agencies for decades issued just a few hundred tickets a year for idling violations.

We think this huge increase in idling enforcement is a good thing and the Citizens Air Complaint Program should be praised and supported by the City Council and the Mayor. Of course, some polluters are angry over being caught breaking the idling law. Hundreds of companies have not paid any or very few violations. Some have flouted the law by delaying hearings indefinitely, hoping for the law to change. Others have asked for variances they don't need, as public hearings exposed. Let them gripe, while we cheer this successful, innovative law that encourages New Yorkers to protect their communities against polluting behaviors that hurt our health and the environment.

Sincerely,

Reinvent Albany
350 Brooklyn
CheckPeds
Citizen Action of New York
City Island Rising
Climate Families NYC
Earthjustice
Environment America
Families for Safe Streets
Food & Water Watch
New York Clinicians for Climate Action
NY Clean Air Collective

NY Environmental Law & Justice
Project
NYC Environmental Justice Alliance
(NYC-EJA)
NYLPI
NYPIRG
Open Plans
Riders Alliance
StreetsPAC
The Climate Reality Project NYC
Third Act NYC
Transportation Alternatives
Tri-State Transportation Campaign