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**St. Helena Parish School District awarded funds from LDEQ for new school buses**



*LDEQ Secretary Aurelia S. Giacometto presents the St. Helena Parish School Board with a check for \$41,986.50.*

**BATON ROUGE, LA** – The Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ) awarded \$41,986.50 to the St. Helena Parish School District funds derived from the Volkswagen Mitigation Trust Fund to replace old diesel school buses with newer environmentally friendly buses. LDEQ Secretary Aurelia S. Giacometto traveled to Greensburg, Louisiana to deliver the check to St. Helena School Board administrators.

“The St. Helena Parish School District would like to thank LDEQ for the funds awarded to us today. We appreciate that the Secretary was able to take time out of her busy schedule to come in person to make this presentation,” Vice President Virginia Bell said. “These funds will serve to strengthen our capacity to provide services to our learners. So again, we thank you and look forward to the positive impact that this award will have on our school system.”

LDEQ was one of three state agencies designated to receive funds from the VW Mitigation Trust. As the lead agency, LDEQ allocated its portion of the funds to target replacement of outdated school buses with cleaner, high efficient vehicles.

“Better buses will save energy and reduce emissions while transporting students to and from school,” Secretary Giacometto emphasized.

The Volkswagen Mitigation Trust Settlement Fund is a disbursement program that was enacted after Volkswagen (VW) entered a plea to a software violation with EPA in 2017. VW was required to pay \$2.9 billion into an environmental mitigation trust fund to be shared among the states and tribes, including \$19.8 million in Louisiana. Sixteen Louisiana parish school boards who applied for funding under the VW Environmental Mitigation Settlement have been awarded funds to replace their buses with electric, alternative fuel, or high-efficiency diesel vehicles. To date, approximately 156 of the 351 buses receiving funding are propane or compressed natural gas (CNG) driven. The goal is to get older, polluting vehicles off the road and replace them with new, cleaner options.

For more information on the VW Settlement, go to <https://deq.louisiana.gov/page/louisiana-volkswagen-environmental-mitigation-trust>.