



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

David J. Valesky

## Coalition of State, Local Leaders Announce Groundbreaking Litter Clean-Up, Enforcement Efforts

DAVID J. VALESKY July 16, 2012

| ISSUE: **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ENVIRONMENT, TRANSPORTATION, GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS, HIGHWAYS**



SYRACUSE, N.Y.—A bipartisan coalition of state, local and community leaders in Syracuse announce

Litter has been an issue in the city of Syracuse, as it is in communities across the nation. A national Keep America Beautiful survey conducted in 2009 indicated that more than 51 billion pieces of litter appear on U.S. roadways each year--6,729 items per mile of roadway. Fifty two percent of this litter originates from motorists, 23 percent from pedestrians and 16 percent from improperly covered trucks and cargo loads.

The new local effort is the result of a meeting convened by State Senators John DeFrancisco and David Valesky and Assemblyman William Magnarelli, which included representatives from

the New York State

Department of Transportation, City of Syracuse, Onondaga County, Downtown Committee, Sierra Club, OCRRA and Syracuse University.

The initial meeting resulted in an agreement between the DOT, city and county to work together to pick up litter along a two-mile section of 690 between the Thompson Road and Teal Avenue exits during the week of July 9.

As a result, the City and County public works departments together assigned 24 personnel to the task. Supported by state DOT traffic control personnel, and using three city street sweepers and a half dozen other trucks, the city/county team cleared three tons of litter and debris from this single section of highway.

The city of Syracuse has approximately 17 miles of interstate highway inside its limits; collection from the entire system would equate to 25.5 tons—or 51,000 pounds--of garbage.

OCRRA, as a partner in the coalition, will be accepting the resulting trash at no charge. If, however, a regular charge applied, it would cost approximately \$250 for disposal of the three tons of litter and debris collected in July. Correspondingly, disposal of the aforementioned 25.5 tons of litter would cost almost \$2,000.

In addition, the coalition worked with city and county law enforcement and the District Attorney's office to step up enforcement and prosecution efforts. Current state law provides for a fine of up to \$350 or community service of a maximum of 10 hours for the first offense, and a fine of up to \$700 or community service of a maximum of 15 hours for any subsequent violation.

In the weeks to come, the coalition partners will roll out an awareness campaign to increase the public's awareness about the litter problem and associated short- and long-term costs to the community. The state, city and county will also continue to collaborate and schedule cleanups along sections of the interstates in the future.\

"New York state and Onondaga County spend an inordinate amount of money on trash cleanup from irresponsible citizens who litter. In this time of economic hardship, we need to enforce the litter laws so that money can be used for other pressing budget needs," said Senator John A. DeFrancisco.

"The cost of litter and debris to our community is significant. This coordinated effort on the part of the state, city and county is just the beginning—we need citizens to be vigilant about not littering, make sure their trucks are covered, and stand with us to tell the community that it is not

acceptable to litter,” Senator David J. Valesky said.

“All parties pulling in the same direction and with the same focus and goal have made all the difference. The NYS DOT, City, County and concerned community partners have put in place a model that can be replicated to clean up our community,” Assemblyman Bill Magnarelli said. “Collaborative efforts between my office and Senators’ DeFrancisco and Valesky have supported the efforts of the City, County and State workers who have collected an extraordinary amount of litter this past week. Now we need the collaborative efforts of everyone in our community to stop the littering.”

“Onondaga County is committed to this effort and I thank our DOT Commissioner and DOT crews for stepping up and contributing to this long overdue clean-up effort,” said County Executive Joanie Mahoney

“How we maintain our roadways is a reflection upon our entire community and when the litter ends up in our sewer system, it ultimately costs county taxpayers hundreds of thousands of dollars to remove. I urge our motorists to care about our community and dispose of their trash properly.”

“This coordinated cleanup is proof that necessity really is the mother of invention. As the state's financial situation has reduced the number of state workers available to clean our highways, we had to find new ways to clear the depressingly large amounts of litter that accumulated,” City of Syracuse Mayor Stephanie A. Miner said. “For years the city has continued to clean the on- and off-ramps from I-690 and I-81 even after state funds for that purpose were eliminated. But now, in addition we will schedule ongoing coordinated cleanups of sections of the 17 miles of interstate though the city.”

“For this combined cleanup effort to continue and be successful, lanes will have to be closed in the middle of the I-81 and I-690 interchange, which will affect traffic much more so than last week’s shoulder closure,” said NYSDOT Regional Director Carl Ford. “I ask that area motorists always consider worker safety when they come across lane closures and work zones and to obey all signs and warning devices.”

“For 21 years, OCRRA has organized and sponsored the annual Earth Day Litter Cleanup, which has removed over 2,093,880 pounds of trash from our County's streets, green spaces and waterways. This new effort is tackling a highly visible area that cannot be addressed safely by community volunteers during our annual Earth Day Litter Cleanup. OCRRA is thrilled for the opportunity to participate in this coalition and offer free disposal of the collected litter,” said Mark Donnelly, OCRRA Executive Director.