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### **Assemblymember Michael DenDekker: Cost of Cigarette Butt Disposal Makes a Statewide Recycling Program a Necessary Alternative**

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In a press conference held on the steps of City Hall, Assemblymember Michael DenDekker (D-Jackson Heights) and New York State Senator Toby Ann Stavisky (D-Queens) today released the results of a preliminary study into the costs incurred by the City of New York to dispose of cigarette butts and other tobacco waste. Earlier this year, Assemblyman DenDekker introduced innovative legislation into the New York State Assembly aimed at recycling cigarette butts. Known as the “Cigarette Butt Recycling and Waste Control Act” (A. 11121), the legislation would establish a statewide program for the collection and recycling of cigarette butts.

The snapshot report, which was produced by the office of New York City Comptroller, John C. Liu, indicates that each year, the City of New York alone spends over a quarter of a million dollars to dispose of cigarette butts.

“Moreover,” Assemblymember DenDekker stated, “when you factor in the costs associated with picking up and disposing of cigarette butts that are thrown onto New York City’s sidewalks and streets, as well as the cost to remove cigarette butts from our sewers, water filtration plants, and parks, the actual costs to taxpayers grow much larger.”

The Comptroller’s study – which was limited to New York City – indicates that based upon cigarette tax revenue collected during fiscal year 2009, 64 million packs of cigarettes were legally sold in New York City, for a total tax revenue of \$96,438,000. According to the study, this translates into some 3,522,849 cigarettes sold each day.

“As I had anticipated, New York is spending far too much to dispose of its tobacco-related waste products,” Assemblymember DenDekker said. “It seems unconscionable to me that at a time when cuts are being made to funding for education, healthcare, and quality-of-life programs, New York State towns and municipalities are having to spend these extra funds on what amounts to unnecessary trash disposal. The implementation of my cigarette butt recycling program would not only save millions of dollars, but would create jobs and return revenue to New York State.

Since Assemblymember DenDekker’s legislation was introduced in May of 2010, it has gained national prominence, and has been the topic of news stories in *The New York Times*, CNN, and *US Today*, among many others. It has also gained a sponsor in the New York State Senate, Senator Toby Ann Stavisky.

“Recycling is not just an important way to keep our public spaces and environment clean,” Senator Stavisky said. “It can also lead to job creation. In New York City, more than 1.89 tons each day of discarded cigarette butts turn up in our trash, on our streets, in our parks and waterways. Between collection and recycling, we can save money on cleaning and disposal costs, and create new industries in the process.”

The report by the Comptroller’s Office only adds to the urgency for public action to be taken on the issue of recycling cigarette butts. Mr. Nicholas Gabbidon, President of National InStore Media and Founder of EcoTech Displays, [www.eco-techdisplays.com](http://www.eco-techdisplays.com), an environmentally-friendly outdoor advertising firm based in Staten Island, agreed that numerous economic opportunities could be realized if New York State implemented a cigarette butt recycling program. “The figures released by Comptroller Liu’s office only reinforces the need for New York State to implement a cigarette butt recycling program. As EcoTech Displays’ own experience indicates, there are opportunities here that are good for business and for the environment.”