



CLOSE WINDOW

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
PR- 391-10
September 15, 2010

**MAYOR BLOOMBERG, SPEAKER QUINN AND COUNCILMEMBER
BREWER ANNOUNCE PLANS TO PROTECT NEW YORKERS FROM
SECONDHAND SMOKE IN PUBLIC PARKS AND BEACHES**

New Law Will Expand City's Smoke Free Air Act

Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, New York City Council Speaker Christine C. Quinn and Councilmember Gale Brewer today announced plans to expand the Smoke Free Air Act in New York City to include parks and beaches. Smoking is already prohibited in indoor workplaces and park playgrounds, and increasingly, research shows that exposure to secondhand smoke outdoors can have negative health effects on otherwise healthy people. To protect the public from the health effects of tobacco smoke, the new law will go a step further and not allow smoking in parks, beaches, marinas, boardwalks and pedestrian plazas. Councilmember Gale Brewer will introduce the new local law tomorrow at the City Council's stated meeting. The Mayor, Speaker and Councilmember Brewer were joined at the City Hall announcement by Deputy Mayor Linda Gibbs; CEO of The American Cancer Society's Eastern Division, Don Distasio; Health Commissioner Thomas Farley and Parks Commissioner Adrian Benepe.

"The science is clear: prolonged exposure to secondhand smoke – whether you're indoors or out - hurts your health. Today, we're doing something about it," said Mayor Bloomberg.

"When this legislation is passed, all New Yorkers will be able to enjoy a walk in the park or a day at the beach without having to inhale secondhand smoke," said Speaker Quinn. "From South Beach, Staten Island to City Island in the Bronx, when people visit parks and beaches, they expect to get some fresh air, not inhale deadly carcinogens.

Studies have shown that outdoor tobacco smoke levels can be as high as secondhand smoke levels indoors and there is no risk-free level of exposure to secondhand smoke. This bill will save lives and make New York City a healthier place to live. I want to thank Mayor Bloomberg, my colleagues in the City Council, and advocates for leading this groundbreaking public health effort."

"New York is the national leader in creating healthy cities, and promoting a healthy life style," said Council Member Gale A. Brewer, as she introduced her legislation to ban smoking at public parks and beaches. "That's why we're pushing to get butts off the beaches. And it's not just a health issue, as any beachgoer knows: despite the clean-up efforts of the Parks Department, the sand is too often used as an ashtray."

Even brief exposure to secondhand smoke can result in respiratory changes in a healthy person and lead to more frequent asthma attacks in children with asthma. A person sitting within three feet of a smoker outside can be exposed to levels of secondhand smoke similar to those experienced indoors. More than half of non-smoking New Yorkers (57%) have elevated levels of cotinine, a by-product of nicotine, in their blood – meaning that they were recently exposed to toxic secondhand smoke in concentrations high enough to leave residues in the body.

"We are all exposed to the harmful effects of tobacco – regardless of whether or not we have made the choice to smoke – if we are around someone who is smoking," said Deputy Mayor Gibbs. "By expanding the Smoke Free Air Act to include our parks and beaches, we will create a healthier environment for all those who live in and visit New York City."

"Cigarettes kill some 7,500 New Yorkers every year, and thousands more

suffer smoking-related strokes, heart attacks, lung diseases and cancers," said Commissioner Farley. "New York City's Smoke Free Air Act has greatly reduced the harm that cigarettes cause to nonsmokers. By expanding the act to cover parks and beaches, we can reduce the toll even further."

"Secondhand smoke is a Class A carcinogen and unsafe at any level," said Donald Distasio, CEO of the American Cancer Society of New York and New Jersey. "The American Cancer Society believes that no one should be subjected to secondhand smoke- period. Smoke free parks and beaches will limit exposure to these cancer causing chemicals and help to keep kids from picking up this deadly habit. The American Cancer Society is proud to stand with New York's top leaders as we prepare to take another step forward in protecting the health of our families."

Smoking is responsible for one in three preventable deaths in New York City. Secondhand smoke causes more cancer deaths than asbestos, benzene, arsenic, and pesticides combined. In addition to the dangers of breathing secondhand smoke, the act of smoking, especially in front of children, makes the practice seem normal and acceptable. Studies have shown that adolescents whose parents smoke are nearly three times as likely to start. Smoking is also a significant source of litter. Cigarette butts, made of plastic cellulose acetate, can take more than 18 months to decompose and are the primary source of beach litter. In fact, cigarette butts account for 75 percent of the litter found on New York City beaches.

New York City anticipates its residents and visitors will follow the new smoking policy on their own. Research shows that 65 percent of New Yorkers favor banning smoking at outdoor recreational places such as parks, ball fields and playgrounds. As with any quality-of-life issue in City parks, however, a violation summons may be issued by the Parks Department when appropriate.

"By supporting this legislation, we welcome the chance to improve the beauty and health of the City's public outdoor spaces," said Parks & Recreation Commissioner Adrian Benepe. "Tens of millions of visitors – New Yorkers and tourists alike – enjoy our beaches and parks year round, and we hope this new legislation makes it even safer and more pleasant for children and adults to play sports and for visitors of all interests to enjoy healthier and cleaner parks and beaches."

Most New Yorkers who smoked have already quit. If you are a smoker, quitting smoking is the single most important thing you can do for your health. New Yorkers interested in learning more about how to quit should call 311 or visit www.nyc.gov.

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