NRDC
THE EARTH'S BEST DEFENSE

NATURAL RESOURCES DEFENSE COUNCIL

Statement of the Natural Resources Defense Council, Inc. ("NRDC")
Before the New York City Council
Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste
Re: Intro. 600, Providing for Weekly Waste and Recycling Collections,
Following Holiday Observances or Other Suspensions of Collection
June 16, 2009

Good morning, Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee. My name is Eric A. Goldstein and I am Urban Program Director of the Natural Resources Defense Council, Inc. ("NRDC"), a national, non-profit legal and scientific organization. As you know, NRDC has been engaged for decades on solid waste issues, both nationally and in New York. At the city level, our primary objective has been to shift city policy from primary reliance on landfilling and incineration to incorporating waste prevention and recycling as the cornerstones of city waste policy in the 21st century. In addition to being environmentally preferable, such an approach is now recognizing as being a cost-effective solution to the city's waste disposal challenge. With me is NRDC summer intern Sara Appleton.

We are pleased to be here today to testify on Intro. 600. This is a straightforward bill requiring that city residents receive make-up refuse collections whenever a regularly scheduled waste or recycling collection is suspended due to holiday schedule adjustments, snow removal activities or other reason. NRDC wholeheartedly supports this legislation.

Intro. 600, if enacted, would have the effect of remedying a critical deficiency in the current DSNY trash collection schedule: under current practice, DSNY cancels the weekly recycling pick-ups required by law when the regular recycling collection day happens to fall on a legal holiday or snow removal day. In contrast, regular trash pick-ups that fall on such days are simply rescheduled for a subsequent day in that week.

The current collection schedule has three main drawbacks. First, it is inconvenient. It forces residents to store their recyclables for another week, when recycling collections are cancelled, or to risk a summons when they place their uncollected recyclable trash out for pick-up with regular waste. Second, it is inequitable. It treats recyclables differently from other household trash and gives recyclables a lower collection priority – in contrast to the dictates of both the city's Solid Waste Management Plan and the State's 1988 Solid Waste Management Act, both of which put recycling above landfilling and incineration on the waste disposal hierarchy. Third, it sends the

www.nrdc.org
40 West 20 Street
New York, NY 10011
TEL 212 727-2700
FAX 212 727-1773

wrong signal to New Yorkers. By cutting recycling, but not regular trash, collections following snow days and holidays, it undercuts support for and participation in recycling, despite recycling benefits in terms in reducing pollution and global warming emissions and despite recent studies showing that within five years the costs to city taxpayers of recycling will actually be lower per ton than the costs for out-of-state trash export.

Finally, passage of Intro. 600 would bring New York City's collection practices into conformity with recycling programs in other major cities. For example, in Los Angeles, if trash collection is postponed due to a holiday or other event, all refuse, including recyclables, are collected the next day, according to the LA Bureau of Sanitation. Similarly in Seattle, when trash collections are suspended for holidays, refuse and recycling collections are both delayed by one day, according to Seattle Public Utilities. And in Boston, if trash collection is delayed one day and then reinstated following holidays or snow removal, so too are recyclables, according to the Boston Public Works Department.

In short, NRDC strongly supports the proposed legislation and stands ready to work with you, Chairman Felder, and your co-sponsors, to secure enactment of this important waste collection reform.

Using a Monday holiday as an example, in order to comply with Intro No. 600, the Department would have to collect the Monday holiday's recyclables on Tuesday while it must also provide regular refuse and recyclables collection service to residents on Tuesday. No matter how much outreach and advance media notice is provided to the City's 8 million residents, there will always be confusion as to when people must place out their household trash and recyclables, resulting in bags and receptacles of garbage and recyclables that would be placed out and left at the curbside for longer periods that is both unsightly and could pose a health nuisance. On-time collection service, which the Department strives to meet, would be detrimentally impacted during holiday weeks.

There are twelve legal holidays among which five (5) holidays (including Martin Luther King's Birthday, President's Day, Memorial Day, Labor Day and Columbus Day) will always fall on a Monday. Despite the misconception that residents receiving Monday recycling pick-ups bear a disproportionate share of lesser service due to those five fixed Monday holidays, in fact, there are only portions of 83 sections among a total of 233 sections citywide that have any recycling collections scheduled on Monday. Therefore, the number of residents receiving regularly-scheduled Monday recycling collection represents a smaller percentage of the entire population of residents citywide.

Last, Intro No. 600 will impact the quality-of-life for all residents throughout the City. Refuse and recyclable materials will be left out at the curb for longer periods of time causing nuisance implications, forcing residents to walk the streets surrounded by garbage, and more importantly, giving rodents more time to feast on material left out for collection.

To reiterate, the Department strongly opposes Intro No. 600 which would cost taxpayers approximately $10 million in this time of severe budgetary constraints, will inconvenience all residents, detrimentally impact on-time service, and negatively affect the quality-of-life in neighborhoods across the City.

I am now happy to answer your questions.

TESTIMONY OF
COMMISSIONER JOHN J. DOHERTY
NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF SANITATION

HEARING BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL
COMMITTEE ON SANITATION AND SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT
TUESDAY, JUNE 16, 2009 – 10:00 A.M.
CITY HALL, COUNCIL CHAMBERS

Re: Intro No. 600: A Local Law to amend the administrative code of the city of New York in relation to solid waste collections.

Good morning Chairman Felder and members of the Committee on Sanitation and Solid Waste Management. I am John Doherty, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Sanitation. With me today is Michael Bimonte, First Deputy Commissioner for Operations, and Bernard Sullivan, Director for the Bureau of Cleaning and Collection for the Department. I am here to testify on Intro No. 600 under consideration by the Committee this morning and to answer your questions.

As proposed, Intro No. 600 amends the New York City Administrative Code by requiring the Department to collect refuse and recyclables within forty-eight hours after a holiday when collection is not made by the Department. The bill further requires that post-holiday collection service shall not result in alterations of any regularly scheduled refuse and recycling collections exceeding twenty-four hours after normally-scheduled collection schedules.

The Department opposes this bill for two primary reasons. First and foremost, this bill is cost prohibitive. The Department has determined it would cost an average of $867,000 to provide holiday refuse and recycling collection after one holiday through the necessary deployment of an additional 1,595 posts assigned on an overtime basis. This is based on current sanitation worker overtime and differential rates under the current collective bargaining agreement. The cost to provide this holiday refuse and recycling collection for all twelve (12) legal holidays would run $10.4 million this year. Included in this figure is approximately $2 million that would be expended by the Department in order to fulfill the bill's 'refuse-only' collection mandate within 48 hours after a holiday. That's because currently there are 30% of the bi-frequency districts that do not currently receive refuse collection service within a 48 hour time period.

Accordingly, the total cost to accomplish both recycling and refuse collections citywide after holidays will run the Department nearly $10 million annually at today's overtime and differential rates. This amount is staggering and is not funded in our current budget.

In addition to these severe budgetary constraints, the Department also opposes Intro No. 600 due to the negative service impacts that would result for residents citywide from mandatory holiday collection. While the Department understands that some residents are inconvenienced whenever a missed recycling collection occurs, this bill will actually cause all other residents to be inconvenienced by delaying their regularly-scheduled collections in the days following a holiday.

THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 600 Res. No. _____

☑ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 6/16/09

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: ERIC GOLDSTEIN

Address: 40 W. 20 ST

I represent: NATURAL RESOURCES DEFENSE COUNCIL

Address: _____

THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 600 Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 6/16/09

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: BERNARD SULLIVAN, CHIEF OF BUREAU

Address: OF CLEANING + COLLECTION

I represent: DSNY

Address: 125 WORTH ST. NY, NY 10013

THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 600 Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 6/16/09

(PLEASE PRINT) FIRST DEPUTY

Name: MICHAEL BIMONTE, COMM FOR OPERATIONS

Address: 125 WORTH ST, NY, NY 10013

I represent: DSNY

Address: 125 WORTH ST, NY, NY 10013

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 600 Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 6/16/09

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: LARRY CIPOLLINA

Address: DEPUTY COM, FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION

I represent: DSNY

Address: 125 WORTH ST, NY, NY 10013

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 600 Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 6/16/09

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Commissioner JOHN DOHERTY

Address: 125 WORTH STREET - NY, NY 10013

I represent: DSNY

Address: _____

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms