



## **STYROFOAM OUT OF SCHOOLS (SOS)/ CAFETERIA CULTURE**

fiscal sponsor: Fund for the City of New York (FCNY)

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**On Earth Day, 2010, New York City Public Advocate Bill de Blasio, State Senator Liz Krueger, and Assemblymember Brian Kavanagh launched a statewide campaign to end government use of Styrofoam ([see press release](#)).**

### **Problem**

- **25 billion polystyrene cups are thrown “away” every year in the US and will take more than 500 years to degrade!**
- Styrofoam (polystyrene) is a petroleum-based product composed of the chemicals benzene and styrene.
- Styrene may potentially leak into hot and acidic foods
- Polystyrene takes up a disproportionate amount of space in our nation's landfills and is not often commercially viable to recycle.
- Due to the lightweight of polystyrene, it is easily airborne and waterborne, and often ends up as litter. Polystyrene is one of the primary components of marine debris, and can be harmful to birds and marine mammals.
- **NYC's 1 billion dollar annual waste exportation bill** is on the rise.
- NYC Department of Education (DoE) serves 850,000 hot meals per day directly on Styrofoam, posing serious health concerns for our children and the environment (except for [TRAYLESS TUESDAYS](#), implemented citywide as of March 2010, initiated by SOS).

### **Opportunity**

- Reducing trash and raising recycling rates in ALL NYC government buildings can significantly lower the environmental impact and soaring costs of exporting NYC's 50,000 tons of garbage per day.<sup>1</sup>
- Via sheer scale and purchasing power, NYC government agencies can set national trends for manufacturing and waste reduction policies.
- NYC recycling costs are now cost competitive with trash exportation and incinerator costs. In several years, as export costs rise, curbside refuse collection is predicted to cost more than recycling.
- Reducing landfilled trash and increased recycling of waste related food packaging creates a closed system, where byproducts become reinvested, saving NYC money (see NY City Council Speaker Quinn's [FOODWORKS report, Post-Consumption section](#)).
- With a growing national food reform movement, it is an ideal cultural opportunity to heighten awareness of the massive amount of garbage we create with our food habits, to raise “reduce” awareness and recycling rates, cultivating healthier food and food waste rituals.

Much more action is required to **fully eliminate** Styrofoam from NYC public schools and government buildings and to work towards zero-waste, healthier food services, benefitting our children and our communities in New York City, and ultimately, the nation.

**Styrofoam Out of Schools Mission:** SOS is working to achieve “zero waste” cafeterias in NYC's public schools by first eliminating Styrofoam (polystyrene) trays, and by advocating a Reduce Policy on single use and non-recyclable food service disposables, packaging, and “plate waste.” We are parents, designers, educators, and policy advocates, accomplishing our work through multi-stakeholder collaboration, innovative design, in-cafeteria education, and community-based advocacy

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<sup>1</sup> NRDC NY, Recycling and Waste, <http://www.nrdc.org/newyork/campaign-recycling-waste.asp>