

# CRAIIN'S

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## Why small firms feel trashed

**CONSIDERING THAT GARBAGE** is always a smelly business in New York, the request by the owners of small food stores and restaurants to install garbage disposals is perfectly reasonable. The Bloomberg administration's opposition to the proposal goes a long way to explaining why so many small businesses think the mayor and his top officials don't care about them.

The issue began churning because of a change in how businesses will be charged for trash collection. The administration is allowing carters to charge bodegas, restaurants and similar companies by trash weight rather than by volume. The change was necessary because it was simply too expensive for trash companies to serve these businesses, but it will be very costly for firms that produce a lot of food waste.

The food stores and restaurants want to offset the higher costs by installing garbage disposals. Businesses in other cities can do so, and several years ago, even New York agreed that disposals could be installed in homes and apartments.

The city's Department of Environmental Protection, however, says commercial disposals can't be allowed because the city needs to reduce nitrogen in the sewer system. If the city has too much nitrogen in the system, it will be forced by federal directives to spend \$1.5 billion on an upgrade.

DEP admits that many factors cause nitrogen and has testified that the introduction of commercial disposals would necessitate only \$15 million in specific infrastructure changes.

DEP's position is understandable. It is protecting its budget. But someone in the Bloomberg administration should have a broader perspective.

In addition to allowing a sharp increase in carting costs, the administration has imposed an 18.5% property

tax increase that has been a particular burden for small businesses like bodegas and restaurants. It has sharply raised fees and fines. It is widely believed to have launched a wave of inspections and raids designed to raise revenue. Small businesses in New York believe they are under attack by city government.

The city should lift commercial garbage disposal prohibitions

Prohibitions on commercial garbage disposals are anachronistic. The DEP's warnings seem exaggerated. And the mayor could benefit from giving a sign to the small business community that he hears its complaints.

The City Council should pass a bill legalizing the disposals.

The mayor should sign it