

Kicking BUTTS

Did you know our beaches consistently rank among the top 3 trashiest beaches in the entire country?

Perhaps you missed the *Miami Herald* headlines on Tue, Mar. 10, 2009 which read;

“Florida ranks No. 3 for trashiest beaches!”

Burned cigarette butts are trashing our beaches and streets. Discarded cigarette butts were the most common litter item found in the *2008 Ocean Conservancy International Coastal Cleanup*. Cigarette butt litter accounted for 31% of all the trash! Just take a look at a street gutter the next time you are at a red light or comb your fingers through the sand at the beach. Cigarette butts are everywhere.



We aren't alone, per se. Cigarette butts have become the most littered item in America, according to *Keep America Beautiful, Inc.* However, we are alone in not addressing the problem.

Outdoor smoking bans have swept the nation. To date 1,124 US cities and counties competing for our tourism dollars have banned smoking at beaches, parks, playgrounds, and stadiums in order to keep their cities clean from cigarette butts as well as provide a healthier environment for children.

Cigarette butts are small, so “it really doesn't matter”, right?

Wrong. Cigarette butt litter is costing our city money, your hard earned tax money!

On May 19, 2009 *The New York Times* reported that San Francisco spends an estimated \$10.7 million a year removing cigarette butts from gutters, drainpipes and sidewalks. San Francisco's annual litter audit found that cigarette detritus made up a 25% of all the trash in the city's public spaces. The costs stem from additional street sweeping, park maintenance and storm drain cleaning.

Regretfully, Fort Lauderdale City Public Works doesn't perform an annual litter audit. But, to put the magnitude of the problem and costs into perspective please consider the fact that Broward County is over 5 times larger than San Francisco!

And, your tax dollars are footing the bill. Think about that math the next time you see someone flick a cigarette butt out a car window or down onto a public sidewalk.

Litter filth causes communities to suffer...declines in a city's foot traffic, tourism, real estate values and most detrimentally in local business.

“As a person who owns several buildings in the downtown, we are constantly cleaning up cigarette butts on sidewalks, street gutters and cleaning City's sidewalk tree grates weekly because they look so unsightly”

Tim Petrillo, Owner Yolo / River House / Tarpon Bend Food / Himmarshee Bar & Grille

You may not know, but on July 10th 2007 concerned citizens were successful in adding cigarettes to the city's Solid Waste Definition, rendering it a **finable offense to litter cigarette butts** in Fort Lauderdale.

Unfortunately, there has been zero enforcement by the Fort Lauderdale Police Department, which is a bit of a surprise considering the city desperately needs funds. Last year, the city generated over \$2 Million annually from issuing petty parking violations that do nothing to improve the quality of our community.

We call Fort Lauderdale "*Venice of America*", but in Venice Italy and all over Europe smokers face steep fines €275 (\$388.56 US dollars!) for improperly disposing cigarette butts. European countries are going to unprecedented lengths to try to make sure their streets and beaches are clean and free of cigarette litter. Bulgaria, for example, just banned smoking in ALL public spaces starting in June 2010.

Please write or email your city commissioners, city manager and chief of police and plea with them to take immediate action to enforce our litter ordinance with fines, just as 1,124 US cities and counties competing for our tourism dollars already have.

Everyone wins. The city generates revenue. The citizens get a clean community. We condition smokers that it's not okay to use our streets, beaches and parks as their personal ashtray.

Mike Moran