

Council 4 AFSCME Testimony – SB 918 – March 16, 2009

Good morning Chairman Meyer, Chairman Roy and members of the Environment Committee. My name is Brian Anderson and I am a lobbyist for Council 4 AFSCME, a union of 35,000 Connecticut public and private employees.

Council 4 supports Raised Bill 918, AAC Requiring the Licensing of Private Solid Waste Haulers.

The recent corruption investigation and subsequent racketeering and price fixing conviction of dozens of people in the trash hauling business in Connecticut and New York shows that a law regulating this industry is overdue. Unfortunately, this scandal reached right into the state capitol.

I am submitting a New York Times newspaper article that shows that waste hauling rates dropped by 50 percent in New York's Westchester County, after the FBI broke up a garbage hauling conspiracy and the county passed a law licensing haulers. This proves that such regulation will not only cut down on organized crime, but will potentially save the consumers a fortune.

Collection of trash is also a serious public health issue. Often dangerous products wind up in the solid waste stream. If solid waste is not properly disposed of and checked adequately for such things as radioactive contaminants, then our public water supplies and societal health will be put at risk. As more of Connecticut's solid waste infrastructure has been privatized, this risk has increased. Allowing the state to have the ability to pull the license of bad solid waste haulers, as it can currently do with bad lobbyists, home repair businesses, doctors or hairdressers, is just common sense. The industry answer that regulation should be done by occasional F.B.I. investigations is laughable. This bill is long overdue.

Thank you. I'd be happy to answer any questions.

April 23, 2000

Trash-Hauling Rates Drop as Much as 50%

By DONNA GREENE

ONE month after a key provision of a new law regulating the carting industry in Westchester took effect, the cost of having garbage hauled away by private carters has begun to drop sharply, in some cases more than 50 percent.

For the 15 years that Ronald J. Styzer has owned Antun's of Westchester, a catering establishment in Elmsford, he was locked into a contract with Valley Carting and had no choice but to pay its escalating bills, he said. This month, however, Valley, faced with losing Mr. Styzer as a customer, cut his monthly bill to \$245, from \$532.

Jim Crookston, the owner of Stewart's Market in Bedford, said he was being charged \$700 a month for carting services until the new law allowed him to fire his carter and find a new one, Finne Brothers of Bedford Hills, who is charging him \$350.

It cost the town of Yorktown about \$5 million last year to have residential garbage picked up by a private carter; this year, with increased competition, the cost will drop about \$1 million, said Linda G. Cooper, the town supervisor.

The shake-up in the garbage carting industry is a result of a law passed last year by the Board of Legislators that was intended to remove the influence of organized crime from the carting industry and encourage competition.

The law includes a customer Bill of Rights, which took effect March 15 and allows carting customers to terminate -- at will -- their carting contracts. Before this provision, customers had little ability to prevent a carter from automatically renewing a hauling contract, often at higher rates, county officials and small carters say. The new law further set up licensing procedures for carters to encourage competition and see that the industry is kept honest.

While commercial customers are the first to benefit from the law, homeowners who contract directly with haulers may also see lower prices as competition picks up.

"The law is having its desired effect," said Thomas J. Abinanti, a Democratic legislator from Greenburgh, who is chairman of the Board of Legislators' subcommittee on trash haulers. "My message to the public is go out and shop. Competition is breaking out all over."

Peter B. Howard, the owner of a newly formed carting company, Windsor Waste Management, based in Mount Vernon, said that he has been offering customers reductions of 15 to 25 percent below their previous rates and that even at this lower rate "we're making money."