

SOURCE: Ithacajournal.com - A Gannett Company

'Do Not Mail' registry has consequences for economy

Apr. 19, 2011

Written by

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The announcement of the new Tompkins County program to reduce landfill waste by establishing a "Do Not Mail" registry needs examination on a much broader level. Certainly, the issue of environmental sustainability is an important one. However, there are other factors that should have been taken into consideration:

- » Mail accounts for only 2.1 percent of municipal waste, according to the Environmental Protection Agency.
- » Reducing mail volume does not "save trees." Trees are a crop. There are tree farms across the world where wood is grown for furniture and paper. These farms provide a good living for employees and landowners. The U.S. Forest Service estimates that the forested area of our country has grown by more than 15 million acres from 1977 to 2007.
- » Reducing mail volume will hurt Tompkins County's small businesses, because your friends and neighbors rely on advertising mail to market the goods and services provided by their businesses.
- » Reducing mail volume negatively affects the U.S. Postal Service and means increased postal costs for all.
- » Advertising mail means jobs — hundreds of jobs — for Tompkins County residents. These jobs are held by your neighbors and include printers, paper suppliers, postal employees and more.
- » Paper is a renewable, sustainable resource — your computer and smart phone are not. Far more cost is incurred and environmental damage is done by disposing of old electronics than by recycling paper.
- » Advertising mail doesn't show up unannounced on your computer screen or call you on the phone during dinner. It arrives quietly in your mailbox, waiting to be opened and used or recycled.
- » There is already a solution: DMAChoice. Established in 1971, DMAChoice was developed by to help consumers manage their mail. It's free and covers about 80 percent of the total volume of marketing mail in the United States. Last year, DMAChoice stopped about 930 million pieces of mail.

Scrap paper for recycling is a hot commodity, currently bringing more than \$200 per ton. Perhaps the county administrators who developed this program should have focused on increasing the reach of their recycling program. Doing so will reduce waste to landfills and increase revenue to the county — all good things!

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