



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
CITY OF CHICAGO

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Mayor Emanuel Announces New Billboard Inspections Reforms**

*Reforms and Increased Enforcement for Illegal Signs Expected to Generate \$2.5 Million in 2012 Revenue*

Mayor Rahm Emanuel announced that the City of Chicago will reform its billboard inspections to ensure the City is effectively identifying illegal billboards across the City and improving collections owed to the City by their owners. Once the reforms are implemented, the improved collections could generate \$2.5 million in additional revenue for 2012.

“The proliferation of illegal and unregistered signs throughout Chicago has been keeping the City from utilizing potential revenue needed to deliver quality services to the taxpayers,” said Mayor Emanuel. “With an expanded approach to identifying illegal billboards and a more effective way of enforcing the City’s regulations, we’ll not only recover funds owed but ensure those who erect signs without proper permits and approvals are held accountable.”

Electrical inspectors from the Department of Buildings (DOB) inspect the approximately 37,000 permitted signs on a biannual basis, with approximately 18,000 signs inspected each year. In 2011, 704 signs have been cited for violations, which may include damaged or neglected electrical equipment. DOB cited 657 signs for violations in 2010 and 1,351 in 2009. Annual revenue from signs varies depending on the number of signs and their size, and DOB has collected \$734,000 in 2011, compared to \$2.6 million in 2010 and \$1.7 million in 2009. In addition, permits for newly erected signs generated \$800,000 in 2009, \$654,000 in 2010 and \$446,000 to date in 2011.

In order to increase efficiency and enforcement, the Mayor will introduce an ordinance that will grant the Department of Business Affairs and Consumer Protections’ (BACP) Revenue and Consumer investigators the authority to write citations for illegal signs and billboards as part of their inspections of businesses. Electrical inspectors will still conduct annual inspections to ensure the maintenance of electrical components, but BACP investigators can identify and cite signs erected without the proper permits. This reform will include the creation of a joint task force between DOB and BACP to increase coordination between the two departments and step up enforcement.



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“I commend the Mayor for recognizing this issue and creating this task force. There are more signs in Chicago than valid sign permits. Many sign owners have simply neglected to follow the law and get a proper permit,” said Alderman Danny Solis. “Greater enforcement should be used to bring more businesses into compliance with the law and reduce the amount of sign clutter in our neighborhoods.”

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