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National Litter Study Illustrates Strong Need for Keep Texas Beautiful

(*Austin*, Texas) – A national study recently conducted by environmental nonprofit Keep America Beautiful (KAB) offers a mixed report card on the state of our country's environment. While the overall amount of litter in the U.S. has decreased 61% since 1968, the report shows a need for continued education, a growth in recycling programs and continued financial support for programs at the local level.

"Litter is a persistent, ongoing issue in this country," said Cathie Gail, executive director of Keep Texas Beautiful (KTB), one of the state's preeminent environmental organizations. "It's wonderful that litter levels have been on the decline nationally, but we have a long road ahead of us. There is simply no reason for anyone to toss their trash on our roadways and in our rivers."

The report showed the cost of litter is enormous: conservative estimates put the price tag for our nation at $11.5 billion per year. That constitutes an array of direct costs, such as cleanup and prevention programs, that are shouldered largely by businesses and taxpayers. Not included in this figure are significant indirect costs, such as decreased property values, lost revenue from decreased tourism and associated commerce, and the health effects and associated costs of living in blighted areas. The nationwide study concluded that, on average, 6,729 pieces of litter are tossed away on every mile of US roadways.

Most litter is attributable to an individual's lack of awareness or sense of obligation, the study showed. However, research confirmed educational programming and planned community cleanups are keys to spurring a significant decrease in litter. Keep Texas Beautiful pinpoints those very areas, using its affiliate network of more than 360 communities to reach upwards of 17 million Texans with a message of personal responsibility, environmental stewardship and community beautification.

During the 2009 Great American Cleanup (March-May), the nation's largest community improvement program, more than 72,000 volunteers picked up eight million pounds of litter to help keep Texas clean. The majority of local communities held their cleanup event on April 4, which marked the Don't Mess with Texas Trash-Off, the state's largest one-day cleanup event. On that single day, Texans collected more than 25,200 bags of trash totaling more than 158 tons of waste.

Registration for the 2010 Great American Cleanup is currently underway, and the process is easy and swift. After your group signs up, KTB will provide banners, posters, trash bags and access to an online planning toolkit, all at no cost. Visit www.ktb.org for more information.

Keep Texas Beautiful is a statewide grassroots environmental nonprofit that strives to educate and engage Texans to take responsibility for improving their community environment. KTB has an affiliate network of more than 360 communities across the state, and reaches upwards of 17 million Texans with its message of waste reduction, litter prevention and community beautification. Working in tandem with community leaders, civic organizations, government entities and local businesses, KTB strives to make Texas the cleanest, most beautiful state in the nation.

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