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New York State Erases Fees Seen as Nuisances to Business

By JESSE MCKINLEY APRIL 14, 2015

ALBANY — It's a good day to be a potato fan in New York. Ditto for supporters of antique and miniature boilers, animal rendering plants, and operators of ski lifts. And for anyone with a career in lasers or food salvage, put your hands together in applause.

The reason for the rejoicing is the elimination of dozens of so-called "nuisance fees" as part of the state budget package, which quietly wiped away a variety of tiny charges and more painful payments.

The repeals were officially signed this week by Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo, who has made cutting taxes a priority in his more than four years in office. And on Tuesday, the governor called attention to such now-extinct fees, framing their elimination as part of a larger pro-business push.

"This action will eliminate unnecessary costs and paperwork, helping to allow these businesses to reinvest and grow in New York," Mr. Cuomo said in a statement.

According to the New York State Division of the Budget, the fees that were eliminated generated about \$3 million in revenue, but were imposed on about 300,000 individuals and entities in the state. They included a \$9 filing fee paid by hundreds of thousands of companies and businesses across the state when they filed biennial statements. The information in those statements, like the names and business addresses of chief executives, can now be included on the company's corporate tax return, according to the budget office.

Many of the other newly repealed fees involved more precise fields, admittedly not ones overly populated. Take, for example, the two dozen owners of antique

steam engines and other boilers who will no longer pay a \$25 fee for inspections, or the six or so owners of miniature boilers who are now free of a \$50 inspection charge. Some 40 organizations that operate lasers no longer have to pay a \$600 regulatory fee every three years.

The fee rollback was a happy surprise for some business owners like Ralph Barocas, a co-founder of RDNY.com, an apartment information vendor in Manhattan, who will no longer be required to pay a \$400 annual license fee.

“I’m not sure the motivation,” Mr. Barocas said when informed of the fee elimination. “But that’s fine. I’ll take it.”

Many of the repealed charges came in agriculture, including in some rather unappetizing industries like food salvage (whose dealers are now exempt from a \$100 license fee) and animal rendering (whose proprietors are no longer liable for fees dealing with disposal and transportation of animal remains).

But perhaps the most salt-of-the-earth repeal came in the fields themselves, where the state eliminated a \$34 annual fee for the inspection of both seed potato plants and — no kidding — seed potato tubers.

Such a change was welcome news for longtime potato men like Steve Tucker, the president of Tucker Farms, an Adirondack outpost in Gabriels, N.Y., which grows a variety of colorful tubers.

Mr. Tucker said he welcomed any reduction in fees for his farm, saying that the cost of getting inspected could be annoying.

“You want them to inspect,” he said. “But you don’t want to pay them to do it.”

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