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Dear Editor,

We appreciated Ralph Gardner's piece "Much Ado About Boxes" in the July 20, 2011 edition. However, to clarify the position of CIVITAS, we do not "hate" newsboxes. In fact, we value the news that many of their publications offer and respect their First Amendment rights. What concerns us is that many newsboxes are not being regularly maintained (or even regularly filled with publications) and in many cases constitute a blight on our well-traveled sidewalks. We do not want to see newsboxes eliminated but would like to see better enforcement by the NYC Department of Transportation and better legislation to allow them to do this. We do not see graffiti-covered, garbage-filled newsboxes as fitting with the vision of "world class streets" that the Department of Transportation has articulated. Many other cities, including Boston, Miami and San Francisco, have achieved the balance of protecting constitutional free speech, the need for public information and respect for public sidewalks.

Sincerely,

Hunter F. Armstrong  
Executive Director  
CIVITAS