

From the Big Easy to the Big Apple

October 11, 2012 3:00 AM Fran Simon

fsimon@tulane.edu

When New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg announced a ban this year on the sale of sugary drinks of 16 ounces or more in restaurants, movie theaters and street carts, he had the backing of Tulane alumnus and former faculty member Thomas Farley. Health commissioner for the Big Apple, Farley is leading the charge in this attempt to curb obesity.



New York City health commissioner Thomas Farley, accompanied by deputy mayor for health and human services Linda Gibbs, addresses the media at a press conference in New York's City Hall. They discussed an effort to combat obesity through a ban on the sale of large sodas and other sugary drinks in the city's restaurants, delis and movie theaters. (AP photo/Richard Drew)

"We are working to shape a city that promotes health," says Farley, who received his medical degree in 1981 and a master of public health in 1991 from Tulane. His city department touches the lives of 8 million New Yorkers and influences health policy across the country through education and advocacy to motivate people to take charge of their health.

People in New York live 80.6 years on average ? two years longer than the national

average. The suicide rate in New York is half the national rate. The number of smokers is at an all-time low of 14 percent of the population.

The crusade to reintroduce human-sized portions in New York started in January 2012 with the advertising campaign, “Cut Your Portions. Cut Your Risk.”

New York restaurants are not allowed to serve foods prepared with trans-fats, and chain restaurants must post calorie information on menu boards.

Farley, previously professor and chair of community health science in the [Tulane School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine](#), follows his own advice about healthy habits. He says, “Instead of running in City Park [in New Orleans], now I run everyday in Central Park [in New York].”

Farley loves the good food of New Orleans and does not link it to obesity.

“People in New Orleans are not getting obese on crawfish etouffé,” Farley says. “It's chips and soft drinks, just like everywhere else in the U.S.”

His best advice for optimal health? Get moving, stop smoking, avoid drinking alcohol to excess, and cut out drinking sugary drinks.