

Proposed fee for sugar

By Rapid Response Media Network

Kudos to Mayor Newsom for his proposed fee for sugary beverage retailers (“Newsom considers city fee for sellers of sugary soda,” Dec. 17). Addressing soda consumption is critical in the fight to prevent chronic disease, especially among children. Simply put, there is a growing link between soda consumption and childhood obesity. Imposing a fee on retailers who are directly profiting from the sale of soda is a fair way to shift the burden away from tax payers who are currently shouldering the resulting health costs. San Francisco can go even one step further by incentivizing the purchase of healthy foods and banning the marketing of unhealthy foods and beverages to children.

Original article

“Newsom considers city fee for sellers of sugary soda”

By Phillip Matier and Andrew Ross

(San Francisco Chronicle, December 17, 2007, page D-1)

After banning plastic bags from chain grocery stores and bottled water from City Hall, San Francisco Mayor **Gavin Newsom** has set his sights on soda - working up a plan to charge a new city fee to big retailers of sugar drinks.

"The bottom line is that there is a direct nexus between high-fructose corn syrup drinks like colas and Big Gulps and obesity among schoolkids," Newsom said Friday.

The idea of taxing soda to combat obesity - which is being touted as the first in the nation - has been roiling around in health circles for some time, including backing from the American Medical Association.

In San Francisco, Newsom said a recent Health Department survey found that 24 percent of fifth-, seventh- and ninth-graders were overweight and that high-sugar drinks accounted for 10 percent of the kids' caloric intake.

All in all, he said obesity accounts for tens of millions of dollars of the city's health costs.

Now Newsom wants the soda sellers - primarily big-box retailers and chain drugstores - to chip in for his "Shape Up San Francisco" program and for media campaigns to discourage the soda habit.

The size of the fee (it won't be billed as a tax) is being worked out, but it may include a sweetener - namely giving the stores some other kind of fee break.

But one way or the other, Newsom wants the merchants of sweet to sweat a bit.

By the way, Newsom said he has no plans for a Twinkies or Ho Hos tax.