



Serving the Vending and Refreshment Services Industry

Sugar Sweetened Beverage Taxes

ISSUE:

As Congress worked on health care reform legislation in 2010, and state and local governments faced budget shortfalls, some in the public health community promoted a tax on sugar sweetened beverages as a solution. At the time, the federal-level proposal was an excise tax of 3 cents per 12 ounces on sugar sweetened beverages. A sugar sweetened beverage tax was not included in final federal legislation to fund health care reform.

In early 2015, Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro re-introduced the Sugar Sweetened Beverages Tax (SWEET) Act. The measure, H.R. 1687, aims to institute a tax on sugar sweetened beverages of one cent per teaspoon of sugar or other caloric sweetener. The stated purpose of the act is to discourage excessive consumption of sugar sweetened beverages by increasing the price and creating a dedicated revenue source for programs and research related to obesity and diet related health risks.

Currently there are many municipal jurisdictions that levy additional sales taxes specific to sugar sweetened beverages. Of late, many states and local governments also have attempted to impose an additional tax on sugar sweetened beverages, often proffering to link the taxes with obesity prevention programs or funding for obesity related health issues. Others have opted to implement bans or additional restrictions on the actual sale of sugar sweetened beverages. Most recently, state legislation was defeated in California to place a health warning label on sugar sweetened beverages and in November 2014 a sugar sweetened beverage tax proposal won the approval of the voters of Berkeley, California.

With the economic conditions and budget deficits continuing to be a challenge, NAMA remains opposed and prepared to combat potential tax increases targeted at the refreshment services industry. Taxes on sugar sweetened beverages are both discriminatory and regressive, often placing a heavy burden on low and middle-income Americans. Such taxes will create new liabilities for the refreshment services industry as well, which could result in loss of critical jobs and taxable revenue. Further, such taxes on beverages are not an effective way to encourage healthy lifestyles or to combat obesity among consumers. In fact, according to government data, sugar sweetened beverages account for less than 7 percent of calories in the average American diet.

NAMA POSITION:

- NAMA opposes H.R. 1687 and any efforts at the federal, state or local level to levy targeted, excise taxes on sugar sweetened beverages.
- NAMA will continue its mission to educate consumers on informed choices and nutrition through its' nationally-recognized "FitPick" program.