

School Safety Alert



"I am absolutely amazed that the US Congress would have enough common sense to introduce legislation that would kick sodas out of the school. I had not realized that the soda companies were functioning like drug pushers and giving their product away at school to get their victims hooked so they or their victim,s parents would purchase this pernicious product. Soda in the school will clearly increase brain dysfunction and the rate of ADHD"

-Dr. Joseph Mercola

Lawmakers Push to Kick Sodas out of School

US Congressional Lawmakers said May 7 that too many schools have tossed aside good nutrition and are now offering students sodas with their lunch - often a free treat provided by soft drink companies. "It is not unlike the old days when tobacco companies passed out free cigarettes," said Sen. Patrick Leahy, D-VT. "Our national school lunch program should be promoting the consumption of milk and other wholesome foods, not soft drinks," added Rep. Maurice Hank, D-N.Y.

Lawmakers, many of whom hailed from dairy states, introduced a bill May 7 that would close what they call a loophole in laws that prohibit the national school lunch program from allowing the sale of foods of "minimal nutritional value," such as soft drinks and sugar candies, during federally-funded meals. Schools that have vending machines now are required under the law to discontinue their use during breakfast and lunch.

Lawmakers charge that soda companies are avoiding the law by distributing their product to some schools free. The proposal would ban the free lunchtime distribution of sodas and other snacks.

The junk food that kids consume at school is contributing to obesity and other health problems, the Agriculture Department said in a report requested by Congress.

"You walk outside the door of the cafeteria and the halls are lined with pop machines," said Marilyn Hurt, president of the American School Food Association. "There's nothing to prevent the student from spending their money on pop and candy instead of going in and getting a sandwich, milk and a piece of fruit."

The Agriculture Department says there are nutritional problems with both the snacks being offered in cafeterias and what's being offered in vending machines elsewhere in schools.

"When children are taught in the classroom about good nutrition and the value of healthy food choices but are surrounded by vending machines, snack bars, school stores and a la carte sales offering low nutrient density options, they receive the message that good nutrition is merely an academic exercise," the report says.

Soft drink contracts have become an ever-popular fund-raiser for cash-strapped schools, and cafeterias are also offering an increasing array of items that include snacks, desserts and flavored drinks.

Between 1996 and 1997, more than 30 percent of school districts increased the number of snacks they were offering in cafeterias, and 22 percent widened the array of desserts, a separate USDA report says.

No data were available on sodas sold outside cafeterias, but about 200 of the nation's 12,000 school districts have contracts that give soft drink companies exclusive rights to sell their products in schools, according to the National Soft Drink Association.

The Agriculture Department imposed restrictions on soft drinks and other items sold outside cafeterias in 1977, but a court overturned the rules in 1983.

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