

# Schwarzenegger Slams Sodas

*By ACSH Staff — July 28, 2005*

California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger has announced his support of the state's pending bills to limit the sale of soda and "junk food" in public schools. He claims this will help in the fight against childhood obesity and says that obesity-related health problems may be costing the state billions of dollars each year, with the number of overweight children still increasing.

The bills, first proposed in 2003, would set statewide standards to limit the amount of sugar and fat in school meals and would also ban soda sales during school hours. These bills, SB 12 and SB 395, have been passed by the state senate and will be soon taken up by the state assembly. SB 395 dictates that a school may only sell [water, milk, drinks containing at least 50% fruit juice with no added sweeteners, and sports drinks that replace electrolytes](#) [1]. So far sixteen California schools have taken it upon themselves to adopt this policy, even though the bill has not yet passed. Since 2001, the American Beverage Association has tracked seventy-six proposed bills in twenty-eight states that attempt to restrict or ban the sale of carbonated drinks in schools, though California seems to be [the farthest along on the path towards banning carbonated beverages in schools](#) [2].

It has also been proposed that ["the bill would allow the sale of sodas more than a half hour before and after school at school athletic events or to help student fund-raising campaigns."](#) [3] Linking soda to fun and profit and making these exceptions must send students mixed messages.

This bill raises a few logistical questions. How will the amount of soda a student may purchase in those half-hour periods be monitored? Won't students still be able to bring soda from home into their schools?

While childhood obesity rates are high and unfortunately increasing, the limits on sales of soda at school will probably not help. ACSH president Dr. Elizabeth Whelan has explained that "Soft drinks contribute to obesity in exactly the same way that any other source of calories does" and adds that ["juices often have the same or higher caloric content as soda."](#) [4] In another report, Dr. Whelan explains that moderate consumption of soda does not threaten health and that too much of any food, even juice or milk, can lead to weight gain. [And what sense does it make to expel diet sodas from schools in order to fight obesity?](#) [5]

Critics of these bills feel that it is not the duty of the state to impose such restrictions on schools. Rather, it should be the responsibility of the local school districts to teach nutrition and physical fitness courses. More importantly, it is the role of parents to teach their children healthy eating habits. Schools should not target a particular food as "bad" but instead should teach young students the value of a balanced and nutritious diet of "everything in moderation," paired with daily physical activity.

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