Common sense in California for a change

By ACSH Staff — May 6, 2013

Kudos are due to the editorial board of the San Diego Union-Tribune for their stand against a proposal to levy a penny-an-ounce tax on a wide variety of beverages including sports and energy drinks and bottled teas, among others. The monies raised via these proposed taxes are aimed, ostensibly, at helping the fight against childhood obesity.

According to the editorial, however, the tax is objectionable on several levels. The tax would be regressive, i.e. would affect the poor much more than the rich. It also would defy public opinion, which was clearly expressed in two California cities where voters defeated proposed taxes on sodas. Similarly, states the editorial, a national poll demonstrated that Americans do not want the government meddling in people’s food and beverage choices.

More specifically, the proposal would use over half of the raised funds for informational campaigns, which would be run at the local level. According to the editorial, such local funding often ends up wasted or turning into pork projects.

ACSH’s senior nutrition fellow, Dr. Ruth Kava, commented: It boggles the mind that lawmakers still believe they can convince the public that funds raised by beverage taxes would actually be used in an effective way to combat obesity. A vague commitment to informational programs does not inspire confidence! It is refreshing to see some realistic opinion on the utility or rather, lack of utility of such proposals. For their sound perspective, I’d like to applaud the editors of the San Diego Union-Tribune.