The attack on sugary beverages continues in the House

By ACSH Staff — August 4, 2014

The ban on super-sized sodas was finally defeated in New York City, but the attack on sugary beverages is far from over. Last week, Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) introduced a bill in the House the Sugar-Sweetened Beverage Tax Act of 2014 that would put a tax on sugar-sweetened drinks of a penny per teaspoon of caloric sweetener. The SWEET Act would add about 10 cents to each can of soda and about 20 cents for each 20-ounce bottle.

Congresswoman DeLauro points to statistics saying that overweight and obesity account for about five to ten percent of all medical spending amounting to $190 billion. And 60 to 80 percent of obese individuals have health complications such as type 2 diabetes, high blood cholesterol, high blood pressure, and other conditions. DeLauro adds that the funds raised should this bill pass would go to the Prevention and Public Health Fund for programs and research designed to reduce the human and economic costs of diabetes, obesity, dental caries, and other diet-related health problems.

However, this move has been tried before and has failed to pass in all thirty states in which it was introduced. And 62 percent of consumers oppose a soft-drink tax, according to a 2012 Harris poll.

ACSH’s Dr. Elizabeth Whelan had this to say: We’ve been discussing the merits of a soda-tax for years. The fact is that there is no scientific research supporting the idea that such taxes will be effective at reducing obesity rates, and the tax unfairly targets one thing sugar as the culprit for the extremely high rates of obesity, an unwarranted accusation. The fact is that it is the overconsumption of total calories and lack of exercise as a whole that is responsible for this epidemic which has pretty much plateaued over the past few years anyway. She goes on, No one is arguing with the fact that this is a problem for which a solution must be found, but it is not going to be found through a tax on sugar-sweetened beverages.