

College Name: Neumann College

Upcoming Class Year: Senior Fall 2009/Spring 2010

Declared Major: Elementary Education

Status: Full-time

Grade Point Average: 3.5

ESSAY

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention says we face a new epidemic – obesity. So called experts and commentators tell us we have a public health crisis. Recently Governor David Paterson of New York said: “Nearly one out of every four New Yorkers under the age of 18 is obese.” The Governor then introduced a proposed tax on sugared beverages and declared that soft drink consumption is a major factor in the dramatic rise in childhood obesity.

Doesn't this sound familiar? First we call something which Americans voluntarily engage in a public health crisis. Next a public official declares Coca Cola is a lethal substance and then we get regulation and taxation as means of making it all better.

Yes we can all rest easy. Our wonderful government is going to make us all skinny and healthy. The obesity tax, as it is commonly referred to will encourage people to make healthier eating choices. Let's declare the Easter Bunny and his baskets of goodies public enemy number one. Just as we wiped Joe Camel out, let's go after Ronald McDonald.

Sounds ridiculous? Not at all! Think about it. This is the same government (Center for Disease Control and Prevention) that tells us that 438,000 people die prematurely from cigarette smoking annually. To get this number, the government simply attributes cigarettes with a death of the deceased smoker, no matter the decedent's age, weight, or lifestyle. So if a 95-year-old dies in his or her sleep, but the EMT's find a pack of Camels on the night stand, let's make it 438,001.

Can't we just hold people responsible for their own actions? Aren't we all personally responsible for our weight? It's not the Coke or the Big Mac's fault. And even if you agree that a tax on these products would help, how would you decide what items to tax? Virtually any product can make you obese if you consume it in excess.

College Name: Neumann College

Upcoming Class Year: Senior Fall 2009/Spring 2010

Declared Major: Elementary Education

Status: Full-time

Grade Point Average: 3.5

ESSAY

From an economic prospective, an obesity tax would punish successful businesses for providing products that people want. The government already taxes income, alcohol, tobacco, gasoline, sales, and just about everything else in our lives. Additional taxes can lead to job cuts in the affected businesses and contribute a further decline in consumer purchasing power. Aren't we already in a recession?

Even if you agree that obesity is driving up medical costs and killing people, taxing certain foods is arguably one of the worst ways to control obesity. There are numerous factors that can cause obesity, and not every additional bite of unhealthy food adds the same costs to society's tab. An otherwise perfectly healthy person who enjoys partaking in a Big Mac once a month should not be forced to pay a tax on his purchase of this product because there are virtually no additional costs to society from this Big Mac. Another person who makes healthy food choices, but does no exercise may add more to society's costs of obesity than the person who makes less healthy food choices, but works out everyday.

A more effective way of attacking obesity would be to go directly after the obese individuals. Everyone could put there height and weight on their tax return and go to the height and weight chart in the instruction booklet to calculate their additional tax. Now there's an incentive to lose weight! For those of you saying this sounds outrageous, think about it. Doesn't this attack the problem directly and efficiently? I am sure the physically fit guy who hits the gym everyday and also enjoys his monthly Big Mac would agree. How about you?