

America is not a utopia where every citizen is in perfect health. America is a country where the freedom of choice and the freedom of expression are pinnacles of national pride and held in the highest regard. It is certainly not in the best interest of the people to allow the United States Federal Government to curtail these rights by raising excise taxes to limit the consumption of a particular product. As obesity becomes the largest health threat in the United States, the Federal Government might be tempted to apply excises taxes to combat this issue similar to the excise taxes placed on tobacco products.

The federal tax rate on cigarettes and other tobacco products remained unchanged from 1951 until the early 1980's when tax rates began to increase dramatically. In February 2009, President Obama signed into law a 62-cent-per-pack increase of the federal excise tax on cigarettes. However, the federal government is being sanctimonious in their efforts to stop smoking by not directly applying the revenues collected from the tax back into health and smoking related issues. Sadly, of all the revenues collected by the excise tax on tobacco, there is no tie to anti-smoking policy.

If a national healthcare program existed, where the government paid for every lung cancer treatment or diabetes medicine, an excise tax to stop smoking or consumption of high fat content foods might be reasonable. Yet in the United States, no such program exists. Citizens are left to private healthcare and paying for their own insurance. The insurance company requires being informed if a client smokes. Every pack of cigarettes has the U.S. Surgeon General's warning on it. Every candy bar has the nutritional information of the back. Isn't this warning enough? Isn't the cost of healthcare enough monetary punishment for American citizens to endure without having to pay taxes on what they truly enjoy?

Fats and sweets are listed at the top of the food pyramid. Meaning they should be eaten sparingly but nonetheless eaten. To tax sugar and fat would be criminal to those who maintain a healthy diet and good fitness. Taxing the consumption of sugar or fat for those who are not obese would be like taxing any other essential dietary need. Although obesity is increasing in the United States, the majority of Americans still have a "body mass index" (BMI) less than 30 - the needed BMI to consider a human obese. We should not penalize a normal American for enjoying a chocolate sundae because of the excessive indulgence of the minority.

Thomas Jefferson once famously said, "I predict future happiness for Americans if they can prevent the government from wasting the labors of the people under the pretense of taking care of them." For the government to use taxes as a means to decrease consumption of a product deemed "unhealthy" by the government is infringing, not only on tobacco companies and private enterprise, but on the exercise of individual freedoms that this country was founded on. If the government truly intended to help they would apply the revenues collected from so-called "sin taxes" to alleviate the problems caused by individuals who indulge excessively rather than attempting to curtail demand through economic coercion.