



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on October 10, 2012

Soda Machines to Start Posting Calories

The supersized soda ban in New York City likely has the soft drink industry on high alert. Perhaps that is why Coca-Cola, Pepsi, and Dr Pepper have decided to release new vending machines that post the calorie counts of each of the soda products.

The Associated Press [writes](#), “The counts will be on the buttons of the machines, which will also feature small posted messages reminding the thirsty that they can choose a low-calorie drink.”



The new machines will be launched in Chicago and San Antonio in 2013 before they appear nationwide.

The companies opted to be proactive following the Supreme Court’s decision to uphold ObamaCare, which includes a regulation mandating restaurant chains and vending machines to post calories information as early as 2013, though the specifics of that regulation are still being discussed. McDonald’s Corp. has already began to post calorie information on its menus nationwide.

However, the soda industry is taking more stringent action than that proposed by the Food and Drug Administration, which would allow vending machines to post calorie information on posters on the sides of the machines.

According to Mike Jacobson, executive director for the Center for Science in the Public Interest, the industry’s announcement virtually proves that posting calories on vending machines is not a burden. “This would be an important step forward,” Jacobson said. “Currently, people don’t think about calories when they go up to a vending machine. Having the calories right on the button will help them make choices.”

A model for the new machines features a 20-ounce bottle of Sprite with a small label on the glass that reads “240 calories.”

In addition to posting calories on the vending machines, the American Beverage Association, representing Coca-Cola Co., PepsiCo Inc., and Dr Pepper Snapple Group Inc., said the machines will increase the availability of lower-calorie drinks as well, and will even encourage consumers to opt for a healthier drink choice with messages, such as “Try a Low-Calorie Beverage”: “We have market research that says consumers really like this — they like choice, they like the ability to make choices,” said Susan Neely, president of the American Beverage Association.”

According to Neely, however, the ABA has not done any research that would prove that the availability of such information would ultimately affect the purchases consumers make.

The latest moves come at a time when the soda industry is being forced to try to shed its villainous image after New York City’s Mayor Michael Bloomberg blamed the industry on fueling increased obesity rates. In September, New York City became the first city to approve a [ban](#) that prohibits the sale of sugary drinks over 16 ounces in restaurants, movie theaters, and stadiums. The ban does not apply to diet sodas, fruit juices, dairy drinks, or even alcoholic beverages. Likewise, it does not apply to drinks sold in grocery stores. Establishments that do not comply with the ban, which could go into



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effect as early as March, could face fines of \$200.

The beverage industry adamantly opposed the measure, contending that it infringed upon individuals' right to choose what they would like to drink. Coca-Cola released this statement asserting that the company has already been addressing obesity by placing calorie counts on the front of its products:

The people of New York City are much smarter than the New York City Health Department believes. New Yorkers expect and deserve better than this. They can make their own choices about the beverages they purchase.

New York City is not the only one targeting soda products. In Richmond, California, voters will be deciding whether to approve a penny-per-ounce tax on sugary drinks in November.

The Associated Press notes that the soda industry is already impacted by a decline in soda consumption in the United States:

Soft drink makers are also dealing with shifting consumer habits. Soda consumption per person has been declining in the U.S. since 1998, according to the Beverage Digest. The decline is partly the result of the growing number of drink options, such as flavored waters, bottled teas and sports drinks.

Addressing this shifting pattern, soft drink companies are developing more diet options and alternatives to soda.

Still, there are a number of critics who argue that the varieties of local, state, and federal mandates on food habits are examples of significant government overreach.

In an interview with *The New American*, Danny Panzella of Liberty HQ — a grassroots libertarian activist organization that led a [march](#) on City Hall against New York City's supersized sugar drink ban — called Bloomberg's rule yet another example of New York's "crippling regulations." He continued,

This is Bloomberg regulating business and personal behavior. He is creating a fiat-bureaucratic system where there is no accountability to voters. He's taking away property rights of business owners and limiting choices for consumers.

Analysts have noted an increased trend at every level of government to target the consumption habits of the American people. For instance, chocolate milk has been removed from school cafeterias across the country, toys are being taken out of fast food kids' meals, and cash-strapped states have turned to "sin taxes," all under the alleged guise of addressing obesity. Meanwhile, healthy options such as raw milk and products grown on family farms continue to face the harsh scrutiny and [overreaching regulation](#) of the Food Safety Modernization Act.

And while the government has not yet decided it has the authority to take complete control of the American people's diets, it has engaged in these sorts of endeavors to "nudge" them in the right direction.

That notion seems to come straight from Cass Sunstein, the Obama administration's regulatory czar who authored the book *Nudge-Improving Decisions about Health, Wealth, and Happiness*.

Sunstein's book provides a variety of measures that can be taken in order to "nudge" Americans toward healthier lifestyles while giving the appearance that Americans are in fact making the decisions themselves, through the employment of behavioral psychology.

And while proponents of these efforts have claimed that it is to improve the overall health of the



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American people, First Lady Michelle Obama has publicly provided another motivation behind the efforts.

According to First Lady Michelle Obama, obesity is a national security problem. In December, 2010, [she](#) said in prepared remarks: “Military leaders tell us that when more than one in four young people are unqualified for military service because of their weight, childhood obesity isn’t just a public health threat, it’s not just an economic threat, it’s a national security threat as well.”

Of course, soldiers lacking high-school diplomas are also a problem for the military — though the government has been addressing learning in the public schools for over 50 years.

In the end, its all about control — that’s how “Progressive” politicians define success.



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