

Writing Arguments

Save Our Soda

by Dani Stevens

You are sitting in a food court with a group of friends. Suddenly, you hear the shrill shriek of a whistle and this announcement: “This is the FBI. Put down your soda immediately. Do not take another sip. Anyone who refuses will have to come with us.” This situation sounds silly, but it is not that far from what is happening in real life. The idea that the government would try to stop us from drinking soda sounds absurd. Yet lawmakers are trying. It is not the government’s job to control individual behaviors. The government should not regulate our soda-drinking habits.

In cities and states across the country, officials are trying to pass laws that will ban the sale of super-sized sugary drinks. Their goal is to help solve America’s obesity problem. According to the Centers for Disease Control, eighty percent of Americans over 25 are overweight. Almost half of these adults are obese. Statistics show that 17 to 18 per cent of children and young adults in the United States are obese. As a result, obesity-related diseases, such as diabetes, heart disease, and cancers, are on the rise.

The facts about obesity and disease are discouraging. However, one of the best things about living in America is that we are free to make our own choices. If government is allowed to limit our soda drinking, what will it turn to next? Will it pass laws against pizza, fried chicken, cookies, and candy? Those of us who enjoy these foods would not want to be told we could not eat them.

In addition, stopping just one bad habit is not the answer to our weight problems. “Targeting soda as the cause of obesity ignores additional significant contributors. Other foods and beverages or bad exercise habits cannot be ignored,” says Alicia Rivera, spokesperson for a beverage-industry group. “This narrow focus will not help us find a solution.” A study published in the *International Journal of Behavior*

Nutrition and Physical Activity supports Ms. Rivera's position. The study found that when schools eliminated unhealthy foods and drinks, obesity rates among the students did not change.

Finally, there are far more unhealthy and dangerous things available for Americans to put in their bodies than soft drinks. People are allowed to use tobacco. Yet, continued use can lead to lung cancer. People are allowed to drink alcohol. Yet, too much can lead to liver disease and car accidents. Yes, there are age-related laws regarding tobacco and alcohol, but there are no limit laws. Soda is far less dangerous than tobacco or alcohol. Doesn't it seem unreasonable, then, that the government wants to limit how much of it we drink? Lawmakers have to find a better way to tackle the obesity problem than telling us how much soda we can drink.