

Obama Open To Tax on Soda and Sugary Drinks

By Brian Montopoli

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(AP)

In a newly-released interview with Men's Health magazine, President Obama has said he is open to the idea of a tax on soda and other sugary drinks, which some have pointed to as a way to help pay for health care reform.

"I actually think it's an idea that we should be exploring," Obama [said in the interview](#). "There's no doubt that our kids drink way too much soda."

"Every study that's been done about obesity shows that there is as high a correlation between increased soda consumption and obesity as just about anything else," he continued. "Obviously it's not the only factor, but it is a major factor."

The president went on to note that there is resistance in Congress to "sin taxes" such as this.

"People's attitude is that they don't necessarily want Big Brother telling them what to eat or drink, and I understand that," he said. "It is true, though, that if you wanted to make a big impact on people's health in this country, reducing things like soda consumption would be helpful."

Michael Steel, spokesman for House minority Leader John Boehner, email reporters in response to the news arguing that "such a tax would violate the President's campaign pledge that no one

making under \$250,000 would pay higher taxes, since – according to the Congressional Research Service – 96.4 percent of it would be paid for by Americans making less than that."

Earlier this year, a proposal in New York state for an 18% state tax on soda and other sugary drinks met with widespread opposition, as the [New York Daily News notes](#).

The Daily News quotes White House officials dialing back the president's comments. A spokesman noted the White House had not proposed such a tax, and an official is quoted saying he "is not going to do so."

Back in May, Michael Jacobson of the Center for Science in the Public Interest [pushed for a three-cent tax](#) on the drinks before the Senate Finance Committee.

"While many factors promote weight gain, soft drinks are the only food or beverage that has been shown to increase the risk of overweight and obesity, which, in turn, increase the risk of diabetes, stroke, and many other health problems," he said.

Health care reform is expected to cost as much as \$1 trillion over the next ten years. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that a three-cent tax would generate \$24 billion over the next four years.

Lobbyists for Coca-Cola Co., PepsiCo Inc and other drink manufacturers have been working to halt any such tax. Spokesman Kevin Keane of the lobbying group the American Beverage Association [told Bloomberg](#), "A vast majority of Americans have heartburn when the government uses the tax code to tell them what to consume."

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