
American Beverage Association

Beverage Industry Announces New School Vending Policy

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BEVERAGE INDUSTRY ANNOUNCES NEW SCHOOL VENDING POLICY:

PLAN CALLS FOR LOWER-CALORIE AND/OR NUTRITIOUS BEVERAGES IN SCHOOLS AND
NEW LIMITS ON SOFT DRINKS

WASHINGTON, D.C.—In a speech tomorrow at 12:00 PT at the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) annual meeting in Seattle, Susan K. Neely, president and chief executive officer of the American Beverage Association (ABA), will announce that the association's Board of Directors has approved a new school vending policy aimed at providing lower-calorie and/or nutritious beverages to schools and limiting the availability of soft drinks in schools. Under the new policy, the beverage industry will provide:

Elementary Schools with only water and 100 percent juice.

Middle Schools with only nutritious and/or lower calorie beverages, such as water, 100 percent juice, sports drinks, no-calorie soft drinks, and low-calorie juice drinks. No full-calorie soft drinks or full-calorie juice drinks with five percent or less juice until after school; and

High Schools with a variety of beverage choices, such as bottled water, 100 percent juice, sports drinks, and juice drinks. No more than 50 percent of the vending selections will be soft drinks.

The American Beverage Association is asking beverage producers and school districts to implement the new policy as soon as possible. Where school beverage contracts already exist, the policy would be implemented when the contract expires or earlier if both parties agree. The success of the policy is dependent on voluntary implementation of it by individual beverage companies and by school officials. The policy will not supercede federal, state and local regulations already in place. ABA's Board of Directors, which unanimously approved the policy, represents 20 companies that comprise approximately 85 percent of school vending beverage sales by bottlers.

"Childhood obesity is a serious problem in the U.S., and the responsibility for finding common-sense solutions is shared by everyone, including our industry. We intend to be part of the solution by increasing the availability of lower-calorie and/or nutritious beverages in schools," said Susan K. Neely, ABA president and chief executive officer.

The beverage industry provides a wide variety of beverage products to schools, including bottled water, juice, juice drinks, teas, sports drinks, dairy-based beverages, and full- and no-calorie soft drinks. The industry will continue to develop innovative new beverage choices, including additional low- and no-calorie products.

"Healthy and active kids can certainly enjoy soft drinks and juice drinks, but we understand that parents want more control over what their younger children consume in school and we want to support them with this policy," Neely said.

The ABA plans to run print and broadcast advertising to educate the public about the new policy.

The beverage industry also supports numerous physical activity initiatives across the country to encourage people to be more active. Beverage companies provide millions of dollars of support to the YMCA and Boys and Girls Clubs and sponsor youth sports teams and leagues throughout the country. For example, in conjunction with the National Association for Sport and Physical Education, The Coca-Cola Company developed the "Live It!" program, which encourages middle school students to get active and provides nutritional education materials.

PepsiCo and America On the Move developed a lesson plan called Balance First? to help educate kids about energy balance. This program reached three million elementary school students in 2004. In 2005, as part of a partnership with Discovery Education, PepsiCo distributed the Balance First program to 15,000 middle schools in the United States.

ABA member companies also sponsor educational websites such as Kidnetic.com, an interactive site designed to teach kids and their families how to live healthier lives through proper diet and physical activity.

Beverage companies also support health and wellness initiatives. Cadbury Schweppes Americas Beverages has launched a three-year, multi-million dollar alliance to support the American Diabetes Association's efforts to fight obesity and diabetes in the U.S. As part of the relationship, CSAB will support ADA programs nationally and locally, including Weight Loss Matters, an ADA program that educates people about the importance of reducing calories and controlling portion sizes as well as the benefits of physical activity with an emphasis on walking.

A number of states have been looking at health and wellness and school beverages issues. Following are reactions on the industry's policy from three state officials:

North Carolina Lt. Governor Beverly Perdue:

"As Lt. Governor and Chair of the North Carolina Health and Wellness Trust Fund, I've worked hard to ensure that North Carolina children have healthy options in school vending. The beverage industry should be commended for listening to parents, lawmakers and school officials across the country. This initiative makes meaningful changes to the beverages sold through vending machines in schools and should be welcome news for anyone who cares about children's health."

Georgia Senator Renee Unterman:

"The American Beverage Association's new school vending policy makes real changes to the way beverage companies deal with schools. It will have a substantial and positive impact for the well-being of students. And I think that is a good thing."

California Assemblywoman Gloria Negrete McLeod:

"I applaud the beverage industry's leadership in taking an important step in addressing the complex issue of childhood obesity. Many factors have contributed to the recent rise in children's obesity rates, but I praise the beverage industry's positive step in helping our kids."

The American Beverage Association is the trade association representing the broad spectrum of companies that manufacture and distribute non-alcoholic beverages in the United States.