

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: **April 4, 2002**

## Proposed 'fat tax' on soda is start of a nationwide 'War on Fat' by politicians

California bill would impose a 'fat tax' on soda. Is your state next?

**WASHINGTON, DC** — Legislation that would impose a "fat tax" on soda in California and study new taxes on junk food is the first wave of a new "War on Fat" by politicians — and should be vigorously fought by every American, says the Libertarian Party.

"This is the next great battle of American politics: Keeping politicians out of our refrigerators," said George Getz, the Libertarian Party's press secretary. "If we don't stop them now, they'll slap new taxes on soda, hamburgers, and ice cream — while subsidizing tofu, broccoli, and bean sprouts.

"But to the fat-cat politicians in California or elsewhere who want to impose new food taxes, we say: Fat chance. If Americans wanted the government to tell us what to eat, we would have elected Jenny Craig president."

In California, State Senator Deborah Ortiz has filed S.B. 1520, which would impose a new tax on distributors of soda and other sweetened drinks. The bill would add about 2 cents to the cost of a typical 12-oz soda, and the money — as much as \$300 million a year — would be used to fund childhood obesity prevention programs.

The bill is an unabashed effort to decrease soft-drink consumption among children, acknowledged Ortiz.

"I don't think there's any one staple of a child or teenager's diet that is so utterly devoid of any nutritional value as soda," she said.

Meanwhile, State Assemblywoman Wilma Chan filed a bill that would require the state to study the feasibility of taxing junk food to fund health and dental services for children.

Fat-tax proponents point to new studies that say Americans are getting heavier, with 55% qualifying as overweight, and about 18% as obese. The *Journal of the American Medical Association* (JAMA) has claimed there is an "epidemic" of obesity in America that is responsible for 300,000 deaths annually.

But Libertarians say the real problem is an epidemic of politicians who want to fatten the coffers of government, while getting new power to micromanage what Americans eat.

**"Our eating habits shouldn't be the government's business — and bureaucrats shouldn't be allowed to micromanage our menus or tax our twinkies in the name of so-called public health,"** said Getz.

"What you eat, and how much you eat, are matters of personal preference and personal responsibility. If revenue-hungry politicians in California want to put something on a starvation diet, they can start with their state's bloated budget."

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## **Don't play peacemaker: Keep the U.S. out of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict**

An expanded American role in the "peace process" is not worth the risk

WASHINGTON, DC — As violence explodes between Israelis and Palestinians, Libertarians have some surprising advice for President George W. Bush: *Don't* get us more involved in the Middle East peace process.

"Further U.S. meddling in this troubled region may well backfire and lead to the deaths of American soldiers, diplomats, and even tourists — while doing nothing to achieve a lasting peace," said Libertarian Party Executive Director Steve Dasbach.

"Bush should resist the impulse, however well-intended, to get more involved in a conflict that poses no direct threat to the United States."

Since a wave of suicide bombings over the past week killed more than 40 Israeli civilians, and the Israeli military moved forcefully into Palestinian-controlled territory, the region has teetered on the brink of all-out war.

In reaction to the crisis, many political leaders have encouraged Bush to get "more involved in the peace process" by trying to negotiate a cease fire, restrain Israeli troops, or send U.N. peacekeeping forces — many of whom are Americans — to the region.

**But more U.S. meddling in the region runs contrary to the U.S. national interest, said Dasbach.**

"Libertarians have just two words for politicians who favor a deeper U.S. role: *Remember Lebanon*. In an attempt to quell a similar outbreak of violence in 1983, President Ronald Reagan sent a U.S. Marine peacekeeping force into Lebanon.

"The result? A suicide bomber murdered 241 Marines, prompting the U.S. to flee the region. What politicians call 'peacekeepers,' suicide bombers call sitting ducks. No American president should put military personnel in harm's way in the Middle East again."

And it's not just American servicemen and women who will be in danger, said Dasbach.

"The Holy Land is full of U.S. tourists and students who have been relatively safe from terrorist attacks. But that could change if the U.S. tries to expand its role. A more intrusive U.S. role may be all it takes to provoke terrorists into targeting American travelers."

To keep that from happening, said Dasbach, the U.S. government should stop selling weapons to Israel and the Arab states; pull the plug on all Middle East foreign aid programs; and above all, refrain from placing U.S. troops in the region.

"The latest outbreak of bloody violence in the Middle East is a human tragedy," he said. "Let's not compound the tragedy by needlessly sacrificing American lives as well."