



# Policy Profile: Philadelphia, PA

## Sweetened Drink Tax

In June 2016, Philadelphia, PA became the second, and largest, US city to pass an excise tax on sweetened drinks.\*

### Tax Amount, Type, Revenue

A 1.5 cents per-ounce tax on distributors of drinks with added caloric and non-caloric sweeteners. Excludes infant formula; products with more than 50% milk, fruit, or vegetables; and drinks for medical use.

### Revenue Use

Anti-poverty measures, including:

- 6,500 new slots for Philly's pre-kindergarten programs
- 25 new community schools with health, behavioral, and social services to improve students' academic success
- Revitalizing neighborhood parks, recreation centers, and libraries throughout the city

### Expected Health Benefits

- Prevent hundreds of cases of diabetes within a few years
- Avoid thousands of cases of obesity per year
- Save millions in health care costs over 10 years
- Decrease sugary drink consumption

### Proponents and Campaign Spending

- Mayor Jim Kenney proposed the measure and the Philadelphia City Council passed it by a 13-4 vote.
- A coalition called Philadelphians for a Fair Future, composed of a broad and diverse group of civic, labor, early education and faith organizations, community development corporations, and small business owners, spent \$2.5 million on ads to promote the tax.

### Opponents and Campaign Spending

- The main opponent was the American Beverage Association (ABA) which funded a coalition of small businesses and organizations called "No Philly Grocery Tax."
- The ABA spent \$10.6 million to defeat the tax and offered the city \$7 million to help fund one year of universal pre-k, in exchange for dropping the tax proposal.

### Amount

- 1.5 cents/oz.

### What is Taxed

- Soda, fruit flavored drinks, energy and sports drinks and diet drinks

### Expected Revenue

- \$91 million/year

### Revenue Use

- Pre-k, schools, parks, recreation centers, libraries

### PHILLY AT A GLANCE

- 5th largest US city, population 1.5 million
  - Black: 42%
  - Latino or Hispanic: 12%
  - Asian: 6%
  - White: 37%
- 26% below poverty level
- 21% of 5-18 year-old children are obese
- 15% of adults have diagnosed type 2 diabetes
- 24% of 9-12th graders drink one or more sugary drinks per day

Produced by Healthy Food America, which works to reduce the prevalence of added sugars in the American diet, by promoting policy and changing industry practice.

Visit [www.healthyfoodamerica.org](http://www.healthyfoodamerica.org) or email [info@hfamerica.org](mailto:info@hfamerica.org) for more information.

## Highlights

- In June, 2016, Philadelphia, PA joined Berkeley, CA as the second, and largest city to pass a tax on sweetened drinks, despite Big Soda outspending Philly's pro-tax coalition by about 5 to 1. It will take effect on January 1, 2017.
- The campaign was framed as a source of funds for anti-poverty projects rather than as a public health measure, although health benefits were included as a secondary frame.
- Philadelphia's Mayor Jim Kenney created a win-win model for other large cities. At 1.5 cents per ounce, the tax will raise significant funds and is projected to prevent chronic disease cases and reduce health care costs.

## Proponents' Main Messages

- The tax is a much-needed source of revenue to fund anti-poverty programs, many for children, which the public wants: universal pre-k, new community schools, and improved parks, libraries, and other public amenities.
- Beverage companies target poor and minority communities with advertising, making substantial profits. Big Soda should do the right thing by giving back to those communities.

## What Worked in Philly

Each community has unique circumstances that dictate how it will frame and design its campaign. Here are some lessons learned from Philadelphia:

- Tie the tax to tangible, measureable initiatives that the public and council members want, and for which government can be held accountable; health benefits will follow.
- Focus on local priorities. These taxes can be an effective and popular solution to address local budget challenges and provide revenue for priority projects.
- Maintain a communications strategy that creates an ongoing buzz of earned and social media to inform the community and bolster support for the tax.
- Build a strong and diverse coalition. Include partners focused on health impacts, as well as civic, labor, and faith organizations, small businesses, and those who support specific initiatives that will be funded with the new revenue.

\* Please contact HFA for citations.



### Mayor Kenney:

“Tie your efforts to tangible initiatives that people care about. When it comes up, acknowledge that it is a good thing to drink less SSBs, but tie it to things that people care about.”

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