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New Ads Caution Washington Not to Tax Hard-Working Families
Strength of Coalition Demonstrates Concern about Slippery Slope on Grocery Taxes

WASHINGTON – Americans Against Food Taxes (AAFT) is releasing two new ads this week that caution Washington policy-makers against raising grocery costs on middle-class families by taxing their juice drinks and soda, as well as demonstrating the strength of a diverse coalition concerned about a slippery slope once government reaches into the grocery cart with new taxes.

Picking up from the focus on middle-class families in ads the coalition ran this summer, AAFT's next execution in the campaign is a television ad featuring a mother with her family reminding Washington that pennies add up for hard-working families struggling through a recession.

The mother expresses concern about the negative impact of a tax. "Families around here are counting pennies to get through this economy. So when we hear about another tax it gets our attention." She continues: "They say it's only pennies. Well, those pennies add up when you're trying to feed a family. Washington, if you're listening, what doesn't seem like much to you can be a lot to us."

The Congressional Research Service says that a discriminatory tax on juice drinks, soda and other sweetened beverages is highly regressive – with the greatest burden falling to low-income and middle-class families. As families continue struggling to pay their bills, protect their jobs and keep their homes, taxing grocery items certainly adds unnecessarily to that burden.

"In this economy, it makes no sense to further squeeze hard-working families with a tax on grocery items like their juice drinks and soda," said Susan Neely, president and chief executive officer of the American Beverage Association, which is spearheading the Americans Against Food Taxes Coalition. "We want Congress to understand our position and what's at stake for families. People think it's an over-reach when government tells them what to eat or drink, especially when it uses the tax code to do so. We agree with the need to improve health care in America, but you're not going to solve the complexities of the health system with a tax on soda pop. You're only going to make matters worse for American families."

(More)

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So far, a tax on juice drinks and soda is not included in any health care legislation, and Neely said the coalition's goal is to keep it that way. Activists are aggressively pushing for a tax on beverages with any amount of sugar, including juice drinks, soda, teas, sports drinks, enhanced waters and flavored waters.

The television ad is now running on national cable networks, including CNN, MSNBC and Fox cable channels. It will continue to run on Sunday public affairs shows as well. Print versions of this ad will appear in Washington Capitol Hill news publications.

The AAFT coalition also released a separate print ad in the Washington Post on Sunday that touts the strength and breadth of its membership – and delivers the straightforward message to Congress: “Don’t tax our groceries.”

The coalition's nearly 400 member organizations stretch across the nation, featuring unions, trade associations, ethnic organizations, health councils, businesses and anti-tax groups, among others. Members include branches of the NAACP, AARP-Illinois, local Teamsters unions, numerous Hispanic and Latino organizations, the National Hispanic Medical Association, American Council on Science and Health, associations representing grocery stores and merchants, neighborhood organizations and citizen anti-tax groups. The AAFT also boasts that more than 60,000 individuals have joined in sending the message to Congress not to tax groceries.

“Times are already really tough for families. We see the struggle every day in our customers and our small businesses,” said Nelson Eusebio of New York City, co-chair of the AAFT coalition and chair of National Supermarket Association, representing independent and minority owned and operated grocery stores. “Washington needs to get what’s happening in the real world. We don’t need more burdens added to us, we need some relief. It’s frustrating that some are actually thinking of hiking taxes on groceries. And we all know that if Congress starts by taxing beverages, other grocery items will be next.”

The ads will run as part of the broader AAFT campaign this fall as Congress continues to discuss health care reform. To see the two ads, as well as learn more about the coalition and its efforts, go to www.nobeverageandfoodtaxes.com.