

MEASURE AA FACT SHEET

Berkeley vs. Big Soda in a Battle for Health

WHO: Sponsored by the Coalition for Healthy Children, the tax on sugary drink distributors is supported by Berkeley's leading health, education and community organizations dedicated to safeguarding the health of our children and community.

WHAT: Measure AA would increase Berkeley's 12-year tax on distributors of sugary drinks from 1 cent per ounce to 2 cents per ounce. It is estimated that the measure would raise an estimated \$2.2 million annually. The measure would also codify how all funding will be allocated, with 42.5% reserved for Berkeley Unified School District nutrition and gardening programs; 42.5% for community-based nutrition education, health services and improved water access programs and 15% to pay for administrative overhead, public oversight and annual reporting.

WHY: The increase from a penny to 2 cents will allow Berkeley to continue to fund critical programs that support the health of the community, despite inflationary costs. It allows the community to fight Big Soda's predatory marketing practices and reverse many of the detrimental health impacts these SSBs deliver.

Negative Health Impacts: Sugary drinks, including soda, energy drinks, sports drinks and other beverages with added sugar remain the largest source of added sugar in the American diet and contribute to serious health problems, including heart disease, Type 2 diabetes and tooth decay. Big Soda aggressively markets these products, often with veiled promises of enhanced energy or health, and typically concentrates their promotions to children and vulnerable populations.

Inflation: Since the tax on sugary drink distributors was passed over a decade ago, inflation has significantly diminished the capacity of programs facing ever increasing costs. What's more, recent federal cuts to nutrition and health programs have placed even greater demand on these local programs.

WHEN: Measure AA was introduced as an initiative-petition and will be voted on by Berkeley voters on election day, November 3, 2026. If supported by more than 50% of voters, the measure will go into effect on XXX, 2027.

WHERE: The tax on distributors applies to distributors of sugar-sweetened beverages sold in City of Berkeley.

HISTORY: In 2014, Berkeley became the first city in the nation to pass a sugar-sweetened beverage tax on distributors. That measure, which passed with a 75% majority, levied one cent per ounce on distributors and has raised over \$12 million since it was introduced to support an array of public health programs including school nutrition and gardening programs, community-based nutrition programs, health and dental screenings, and improved water access programs.

In 2024, 81% of Berkeley residents voted to renew the tax.

In 2026, volunteers collected signatures from more than 5,000 Berkeley residents for an initiative petition to raise the tax on distributors to 2 cents per ounce. The initiative led to Measure AA being placed on the 2026 November ballot.

SUCCESS: In 2024, the Journal of the American Medical Association's (JAMA) Health Forum published a comprehensive evaluation of the efficacy of SSB taxes. In addition to showing a 33.1% decrease in SSB consumption among cities with an SSB, the authors suggested that "scaling SSB taxes nationally could yield substantial public health benefits.

Also in 2024, the Praxis Project released its evaluation of the impact of Berkeley's 10-year SSB tax, stating that, "evidence... suggests interesting health and wellbeing impacts at both the individual and community levels. These include changes in behavior, increased access to care, shifts in the built environment, and a growing "culture of health" among community members."

The numbers are the best indicator of the success of the SSB tax and the programs it funds:

- 80,000 health and dental screenings completed
- 30,000 community workshops/classes held
- 3,000 food assistance touchpoints
- 16 Hydration Stations installed in Berkeley
- 12,000 BUSD students attended garden or cooking classes in 2024-25

INFO: For more information, visit: www.BerkeleyVsBigSoda.org

