



STATE OF VERMONT
SENATE CHAMBER
115 STATE STREET
MONTPELIER, VT
05633-5201

**Statement of Senator Dick Mazza
Regarding the Proposed Sugar Sweetened Beverage Tax
January 20, 2015**

I hear from Vermont businesses, families and individuals every day that they are struggling to get by and make ends meet. As we begin this new biennium, Vermonters are hopeful that we will focus on the issues that matter most to them and work hard to develop policies that support businesses and lower the cost of living. Unfortunately, the proposal to tax sweetened beverages is a step in the wrong direction towards meeting those goals.

These taxes will substantially raise our grocery costs, at a time when Vermonters can least afford it, and will hurt grocers and other retailers as well during this tough economic time. Taxes in Vermont are already among the highest in the country and the dream of prosperity seems to be slipping away for too many.

Advocates may claim the money will go toward health programs but we know that Montpelier's budget troubles are significant and any tax increase on Vermont families are more likely to go to shoring up the general fund and increasing state spending. That is not acceptable to me.

Vermont families and businesses are doing the necessary and responsible thing by making tough budget decisions to live within their means. While I know it's hard, Montpelier has an obligation to do the same.

Contact Information:

777 Westshore Drive
Colchester, VT 05446
802-863-1067 (h)
802-862-4065 (w)



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Statement of Senator Peg Flory Regarding the Proposed Sugar Sweetened Beverage Tax January 20, 2015

"We hear lawmakers say time and again that taxes in Vermont are too high. And they are right. The people of Rutland County are really struggling to get by as the cost of property taxes, heating fuel, food and other living expenses continue to rise. The latest proposal to impose a \$0.02 per ounce excise tax on sweetened beverages is a step in the wrong direction towards growing our economy and giving working families a break. In addition, this is a regressive tax that will hurt low-income Vermonters most.

"Vermont Sweetwater in Poultney represents the very best of Vermont. They are a locally owned and operated craft beverage bottling company. They turn the sweetness of maple sap and carbonation into a delightful treat and great Vermont product. This tax targets their livelihood and could drive up the cost of their product making business no longer viable. That is unacceptable to me.

"As a border county with New York, Rutland County knows too well the impact that our tax policy has on jobs and the economy of our region. As prices for snacks and beverages increase in Vermont, more and more business will be lost to New York stores.

"We cannot tax our way to better health. And we cannot tax Vermonters at every turn to pay for more and more and more government spending. I hope my colleagues will reject this bad idea and instead focus on legislative initiatives that create jobs, grow our economy and improve the lives of the people we serve."

Contact Information:

pflory@leg.state.vt.us

3011 U.S. Route 7
Pittsford, VT 05763
802-483-6854

**SENATOR JOHN CAMPBELL
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE**



**STATE OF VERMONT
OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE**

For Immediate Release:

January 20, 2015

Contact: Erika Wolffing
ewolffing@leg.state.vt.us
(802) 828-3806

Statement of Senate President Pro Tem, John Campbell Regarding the Vermont Beverage Tax Proposal

"I believe very strongly in advancing policy that will help Vermonters lead healthier lives however, the proposal to tax beverages containing added sugar is not the way to address our shared goal. Taxation is not the way to encourage healthy behavior. This proposal will not only increase the cost of living for working families, it will also harm the businesses that produce these beverages and those who bottle, distribute and sell them.

"In my district, this legislation will further increase our competitive disadvantage with New Hampshire and cause more consumers to purchase the products over the border hurting grocers and small stores.

"At a time when we are tackling so many tough budget challenges, it's critically important that we work together to pass a balanced and responsible budget as well as legislation that addresses our economic challenges."

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