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**S.F. Schools Join War on Obesity, Ban Junk Food
Soda, Candy to Be Banished -- But Only From Cafeterias**

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Despite the loss of revenue involved, San Francisco public schools have joined a small but growing list of districts across the country that are fighting obesity in students by banning soft drinks and candy.

The board unanimously approved a resolution Tuesday night to eliminate the sale of sodas and unhealthy snacks throughout the district's 114 schools beginning next school year, a move that could potentially leave the district's food nutrition program \$500,000 in the red.

The resolution will also create a school nutrition task force whose objective will be finding ways to eliminate unhealthy levels of fat, sugar and salt from breakfasts and lunches served in cafeterias. The resolution was sponsored by outgoing board President Jill Wynns and Commissioner Dan Kelly.

"The goal here is to begin looking at our school nutrition policy broadly in order to make it better," said Kelly, a pediatrician. "We need to make sure that all the choices available are good ones."

School districts in Oakland and Los Angeles also have banned junk food and soft drinks, and Sacramento schools are considering doing the same.

But San Francisco's resolution would only eliminate sodas and snacks sold in cafeterias, not those in vending machines or student stores, a problem that will have to be addressed by the task force.

Paula Baum, a school district nurse, told the board she has seen students "eating candy before breakfast in the morning. . . . We have to consider the costs to the health of our students if we don't proceed ahead."

There has been little opposition to the proposal, but it has been criticized as short-sighted by the soft drink industry, which has become increasingly alarmed as more districts consider similar bans.

"We are in agreement that obesity among children is a problem, but we feel very strongly that banning soft drinks will have no impact on that problem," said Sean McBride, a spokesman for the National Soft Drinks Association. "If (board members) want to be constructive in addressing obesity, they should focus on more nutrition education and daily physical education classes."

The meeting began with an election to replace the outgoing board president. As expected, former Muni chief Emilio Cruz won by a 4-3 vote with the support of Chris Mar, Mark Sanchez and Sarah Lipson.

But not before commissioners Wynns, Kelly and Eddie Chin made a last-ditch effort to convince the board to choose Kelly.

Several speakers before Tuesday's meeting also had pleaded with the board to support Kelly, a four-term board member. They questioned Cruz's attendance record and commitment to education. Since he was appointed to the board in 2001, Cruz has missed 25 out of 58 various board meetings while Kelly only missed three.

But Cruz said he would take the appointment seriously.

"I feel small in this seat," he said. "There are big shoes to fill."

Among other items to be voted on by the board Tuesday night was a controversial anti-war resolution sponsored by commissioners Eric Mar and Mark Sanchez. The original resolution called for promoting a districtwide anti-war rally and creating a curriculum culled from the resources of anti-war groups to be used from kindergarten on up.

But even before the board meeting, the resolution was hit with a wave of criticism. Mar and Sanchez decided to submit a softened version of the resolution that deleted mention of the rally, listed the organizations in a separate attachment as possible resources and allowed the district to determine age-appropriate guidelines.

The resolution includes a clause that would allow students, teachers and staff members who object to the program to decline to participate.

But the revisions weren't good enough to many parents who spoke out at the meeting against the district's involvement in a political issue.

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