

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: **December 8, 1999**

## Hide the ham: Health fanatics want to slap a 'fat tax' on your favorite foods

WASHINGTON, DC — That scrumptious meal you had for Thanksgiving — and the festive feast you're probably planning for Christmas — may get hit with a "fat tax" if certain public health fanatics get their way, the Libertarian Party warned today.

"Hide the ham, guard the gravy, and hold on to your hamburger: The calorie cops are coming after us," said Steve Dasbach, the party's national director. "If we don't stop them, the grease Gestapo will do to fatty foods what they've already done to cigarettes."

In recent months, the "fat tax" — **a new federal tax that would be levied against high-calorie and high-fat foods** — has been endorsed by several organizations as a solution to a national "obesity epidemic."

"Using language strikingly similar to the anti-tobacco jihad, the Calorie KGB is demanding that the government launch a war against fatty foods," said Dasbach. "They want to put a sin tax on food, while fattening the federal coffers."

How shrill has this crusade for a fat-free America become? Here are some examples:

■ At a recent conference in Washington, DC on "Obesity: The Public Health Crisis," the president of the American Obesity Association (AOA) demanded new "fat taxes" to fund anti-obesity educational programs.

■ *The Journal of the American Medical Association* called obesity "the second-leading cause of preventable death in the U.S. after smoking," and said, "The time has come to develop a comprehensive strategy — analogous to those already in place for tobacco use."

■ Kelly Brownell of Yale University said obesity is caused by a "toxic food environment" — such as restaurants that offer "high-calorie foods, heavily promoted and good tasting." Brownell also said: "There is no difference to me between Joe Camel and Ronald McDonald," and endorsed a "twinkie tax" on high-calorie food to discourage overeating.

■ The Center for Science in the Public Interest said a "fat tax" is not enough, and called for a ban on "junk food" advertising, and mandatory calorie labels on restaurant menus.

**But such suggestions ignore the right of Americans to choose what they want to eat** — and the right of restaurants to serve it, said Dasbach.

"What you eat, and how much you eat, are matters of personal preference and personal responsibility," he said. "Our eating habits shouldn't be the government's business — and bureaucrats shouldn't be allowed to micromanage our menus or tax our twinkies in the name of so-called public health. If revenue-hungry politicians want to put something on a starvation diet, they can start with the federal budget."

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