

RFK Jr. Seeks to Ban Soda Buying With Food Stamps in Health Push

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US Secretary of Health and Human Services Robert F. Kennedy Jr. joined West Virginia's governor, Patrick Morrisey, on Friday in declaring the latest front in their war on unhealthy foods.

Morrisey announced that he will ask the United States Department of Agriculture to stop allowing West Virginia residents to purchase soda through government-funded food programs.

“West Virginia is leading the nation in passing a bill to clean up our food supply and submitting a waiver to remove soda from SNAP,” Kennedy said at an elementary school in Martinsburg, West Virginia, where he joined Morrisey to announce new state legislation banning certain food dyes in school lunches.

The joint event, where both men sported green caps emblazoned with Kennedy's “Make America Healthy Again” slogan, offered a glimpse at the Trump administration's playbook for going after Big Soda. And if they have their way, the momentum could spread to other states.

According to entrepreneur and White House adviser Calley Means, who was also present at the event, the Trump administration is suggesting states submit waivers to the USDA to take soda out of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program as a first step before moving onto candy and other confectioneries.

Kennedy is working to convince other state governors to take similar action, according to Means. “Bobby is talking to at least 15 governors” to convince them to take similar action, Means said.

HHS does not have authority to approve the waivers, but Kennedy is lending his political cachet to build momentum.

Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins expressed openness to the idea of working with Kennedy to examine unhealthy food purchased through SNAP.

“Are [taxpayers] okay with us using their tax dollars to feed really bad food and sugary drinks to children who perhaps need something more nutritious?” Rollins said last month.

Neither [PepsiCo](#) or [Keurig Dr. Pepper](#) responded to requests for comment. [Coca-Cola Co.](#) referred requests for comment to the industry’s Washington DC-based trade group, American Beverage.

“We are fiercely protective of our consumers and their ability to make decisions for their families,” said Meredith Potter, a senior vice president at American Beverage. “We do not support restricting what a certain amount of the population can buy.”

Both Kennedy and Morrissey criticized soda manufacturers for lobbying against the changes, and Kennedy likened the fight against food lobbyists to the public health push against the tobacco industry.

“It takes a lot of courage to stand up to these companies the same way that it did to stand up to big tobacco,” Kennedy said.

Earlier this week, Utah Governor Spencer Cox signed a bill seeking a waiver from the government to stop state residents from using their benefits for candy or soda. The federal government’s SNAP program serves 42 million, according to the agency’s 2023 fiscal year data.