



NEWS RELEASE

Contra Costa County
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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BOARD OF SUPERVISORS TO APPROVE HEALTHY FOOD CHOICES POLICY FOR VENDING MACHINES

What:	Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors considers County policy to require healthy foods & drinks in County vending machines.
Where:	Board of Supervisors, Board Chambers 651 Pine Street, Martinez, CA
When:	Tuesday, December 14, 2004 10:00am (approximate time)

MARTINEZ, CA., Vending machines in Contra Costa County will soon be offering healthy food and beverage choices after Supervisor John Gioia's proposal is approved by the Board of Supervisors on December 14. The proposal would require that all county vending machines provide healthy choices for at least half of all the food and beverage choices they offer.

"This policy is about making the healthy choice an easier choice," said Supervisor John Gioia, who sponsored the proposal. "During the holidays, we all tend to forget about the importance of healthy food choices, and Contra Costa is trying to give more choices to everyone who uses the County vending machines for a snack or meal."

The policy would apply to vending machines located in all county facilities, including courthouses, health clinics, county hospitals, and community centers.

Supervisor Gioia first proposed the policy at an October 2004 Board of Supervisors meeting, where the Board instructed the County Health Department to create recommendations around making vending machine content healthier. The December 14th proposal is the culmination of the Health and General Services Departments' recommendations on how to make County vending machines cost-neutral and health-friendly.

Dr. Wendel Brunner, the County's Public Health Director notes that 67 percent of Californians are overweight or obese. "Obesity has become epidemic among Americans. The annual cost of obesity to California alone is a whopping \$28 billion, which could more than pay for the entire 2003-2004 state budget deficit," he said.

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2-2-2-2 Healthy Food Vending Choices

Supervisor Gioia said his proposal highlights the importance of prevention, which involves creating an environment that supports healthy food and beverage choices. “In the interest of the health of County residents and employees who work in or visit County facilities, the County will take action to ensure that County vending machines have food and beverages that are good for them. We should be investing in the health of our residents, and because food access is a critical component of healthy eating, this is an important step,” he said.

Contra Costa is a leader in developing policy to improve community health. Contra Costa was among the first counties to pass secondhand smoke ordinances and to support legislation that would eliminate junk food in schools. Contra Costa also was the first county in California to adopt an official food policy that requires healthy food choices at all county-sponsored functions.

Dr. Brunner said that the vending machine proposal is just one of a spectrum of initiatives the county is pursuing to prevent obesity.

“We have food, nutrition, and physical activity projects that promote healthful eating as well as regular exercise. One of our more innovative programs is NewKids, which works with families, healthcare providers, schools and the YMCA in East County to prevent and treat childhood obesity,” Dr. Brunner said.

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