

August 7, 2009

Dear Activist:

It's the Congressional Recess and now's a good time to engage your Senators and Representative at home about health care reform and the appropriate funding role of health taxes to help pay for it. August will provide numerous opportunities to attract the attention of federal legislators, and we hope you will act on them. Previously, we asked that you send a letter; in this communication, we're asking you to become a bit more personally involved.

Your Senators and/or Representatives are key players on health care reform – because they're on the committees of jurisdiction or they will likely be on the conference committee that will ultimately mesh the House and Senate bills. Certainly, other important issues may dominate the public health care reform discussion during August and September – regarding the universality of coverage, whether or not there's to be a “public option,” and whether or not to tax insurance benefits, etc. However, we're convinced that the identification of all revenue sources needed to provide meaningful health care reform has not yet occurred and that there are still opportunities to inject prevention-oriented health taxes (increases in alcohol taxes and taxes on sugar-sweetened beverages) into the mix.

We encourage you to:

- attend town hall meetings, public hearings, and legislators' policy speeches, ask questions and speak up in support of health taxes;
- request a meeting for yourself and several community “influentials” with your Representative or Senator, or with their district office tax and/or health staffers;
- write letters to the editor of your local newspapers;
- mount a coalition effort to educate and lobby the editorial boards of local newspapers to editorialize in favor of prevention-oriented health taxes to help fund health care reform; and
- develop and release organizational and/or coalition statements supporting health taxes to help pay for health care reform.

To assist you in these activities, we've attached a variety of background materials on alcohol and sugar-sweetened beverage tax issues and a list of questions to pose to legislators. We hope they will be helpful. For more information, please contact George Hacker (ghacker@cspinet.org) or Julie Greenstein (jgreenstein@cspinet.org).

Thank you for your consideration and for your advocacy for improved health in America.

GAH, JG