



For Immediate Release – December 15, 2008

**Contact: Anna DeKnatel/Alex Navarro-McKay (BerlinRosen) 646.452.5637
Or Jennifer March-Joly (CCC) 212.673.1800, x25**

Citizens' Committee for Children of New York Releases New Poll Data Showing the Public Strongly Supports New Taxes on Soda and Alcohol to Protect Public Health and Limit Service Cuts

***Poll Finds Broad Support for a New Penny-per-Ounce Tax on Sugar
Sweetened Beverages Linked to Obesity and Diabetes; Public Also Favors
Increasing the Alcohol Tax to 10 Cents per Drink***

NEW YORK, NY – Citizens Committee for Children of NY (CCC) today released new state-wide poll data showing that the public strongly supports taxes on soda and alcohol to protect public health and mitigate New York State's budget crisis. CCC called for new revenue initiatives: a new tax on sugar-sweetened beverages, which are linked to obesity and diabetes, and an increase in the alcohol tax.

“We are proposing common-sense solutions that address serious public health concerns while helping to protect vital public services,” said **Jennifer March-Joly, Executive Director of CCC**. CCC's specific proposals are to:

- Charge a one-cent-per-ounce tax on all sugar-sweetened beverages – such as soda and so-called sports drinks – and use a portion of the money to combat obesity in children and adults. This would generate an estimated \$1 billion per year and prevent thousands of children from becoming obese.
- Increase the tax on alcoholic beverages, including beer, wine and liquor, to 10 cents per drink – and use a portion of the money to prevent youth drinking and provide treatment for alcohol abuse. The tax would generate nearly \$500 million annually.

Obesity has reached epidemic levels throughout New York State, and combating it is critical to our future. As the Public Health Association of New York City and the City University of New York's Campaign Against Diabetes declare in a report released last week, inaction could worsen a wide range of health problems, including diabetes, heart disease, asthma and high blood pressure.

By reducing consumption of empty calories, the tax on sugar-sweetened beverages would squarely address this issue. “Soda and other sugar-sweetened drinks are the leading single contributor to obesity,” said **Elie Ward, Director of Policy and Advocacy, American Academy of Pediatrics, New York State**. “Raising the price of this liquid candy will put children and teens on a path to a healthier diet, and help stem the epidemic of obesity and diabetes.”

Higher alcohol taxes could also help improve public health. Five hundred or more New Yorkers die in alcohol-related traffic accidents each year, and alcohol contributes to child abuse and neglect. New York’s alcohol taxes have not kept pace with inflation in recent decades. As a result, we now tax beer, wine and spirits at far lower rates than many other states.

“States with the lowest alcohol taxes tend to have the highest rates of teenage drinking,” said **Joseph A. Califano, Jr., Chairman and President of The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University** and former United States Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare. “Raising alcohol taxes would save young lives and reduce school drop-outs, teen pregnancy and crime.”

CCC commissioned a survey of 750 New Yorkers around the state and found strong support for both proposals. “We urge state leaders to take note of the broad support and significant health benefits of these new revenue measures,” said March-Joly. “These common-sense alternatives are good public policy and are popular.”

Among the survey’s key findings:

- When initially asked, 62% of respondents support increasing the alcohol tax by 10 cents a drink. After hearing about the benefits -- raising money to fight teen alcohol use while reducing the need for cuts in public services and increases in other taxes -- 74% support increasing the alcohol tax. Only 24% of respondents oppose this initiative.
- When initially asked, 52% support a penny-an-ounce tax on sugar-sweetened beverages. After hearing more about the initiative and when revenues from this tax are used to address child obesity and reduce the need to cut services and raise other taxes, 72% support the tax and only 27% oppose it.
- By margins of more than 3 to 1, voters prefer taxes on sugar-sweetened beverages and alcohol over cuts in government services
- By margins of between 4 to 1 and more than 10 to 1, voters prefer taxes on sugar-sweetened beverages and alcohol over increases in property or sales taxes, respectively.

A detailed summary of the poll results is available online at www.cccnewyork.org

About the Poll

CCC commissioned a survey of 750 randomly selected likely New York State voters on public health issues. Respondents were interviewed by telephone from December 2-7, 2008. The survey results have a margin of error of +/- 3.6 percent.