



Experts Say Obamacare Pushes Menu Labeling, ‘Slush Fund’ for Health Propaganda

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The New York City soda ban has been struck down for now, but what some conservative call “food police” policies still persist, primarily with the Obamacare-enforced national menu labeling requiring restaurants to show the calorie count for foods. Meanwhile, state and local governments are considering taxes on soda and anti-trans fat measures.

What appears to be healthy-eating initiatives could be a major encroachment on freedom, said Walter Olson, the senior fellow at the Center for Constitutional Studies at the libertarian CATO Institute. He referred to a Chicago public school that prohibited parents from packing their child’s lunch because school personnel could not monitor the meals. He further referred to a Harvard public health study that suggested obese children be removed from their parents.

Olson, during a panel discussion on the “Food Police” at the Heritage Foundation, added that the threat from the Obama administration isn’t from the first lady.

“Conservatives are distracted by the Michelle Obama half of the equation, where most of what she has done is pretty innocuous actually,” Olson said referring to the first lady’s “Let’s Move” campaign to increase exercise and better eating habits for children.

“We’re not paying attention when the president named as head of the Centers for Disease Control none other than Thomas Frieden, Bloomberg’s health czar in New York. That’s a much greater tipping of his hand than anything Michelle Obama has done,” he added.

Frieden was named to the post in May 2009, after serving as the commissioner of the New York City Health Department through most of New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg’s first two terms, pushing anti-smoking and anti-trans fat and anti-soda proposals. He was not in New York when Bloomberg pushed the ban on large sodas. But, Olson said he set the tone.

That’s not the only problem, Olson said, referring to Obamacare.

“The other thing the Obama administration is doing is funneling massive grants, millions and millions of dollars to localities that are willing to do things like propagandize against salt and fat and for outright lobbying to get people to stir up these local initiatives to have the town ban happy meals or have the town ban the locations of a fast food restaurant through zoning,” Olson said.

“You thought these things were springing up because the federal government was interested in them. The fact is, the federal government, your money, has been paying for those things to spring up everywhere,” Olson continued. “So I don’t know if we can defund Obamacare in general. But the fact is Obamacare has a slush fund, which is going to be projected \$2 billion often insulated from the appropriations process in Congress in order to do health interventions putting propaganda in localities. I hope they can defund that part of it.”

Part of the problem has been government bureaucrats redefining themselves, said J. Justin Wilson, a senior research analyst at the Center for Consumer Freedom.

“Public health has been very, very good. It’s a \$3 billion industry,” Wilson said. “But they were way too effective, they have pension funds and they have careers they want to make, so you have mission creep, what was public health is now private health. That you can go up the chain a little bit more – what we really need to do is protect people from themselves because that’s really where the problems are. What’s slowing the increase in life expectancy and they are realizing now it’s individual bad behavior.”

But even these regulations aren’t effective, said Nita Ghei, policy researcher and editor at the Mercatus Center. She pointed that the state and California and numerous municipalities required menu labeling before Obamacare, while a growing number of restaurants voluntarily listed calorie counts on mentions. Despite all this in recent year, obesity has increased.

But she added, there is another way of looking at this.

“It’s a sign that the United States is enormously wealthy,” Chei said. “I grew up in India. There we didn’t worry about the population becoming obese. We worried about them starving to death.”