

Coca Cola Shareholder Meeting Question
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My name is David Almasi, and I am representing the National Center for Public Policy Research, a free-market think-tank, and a company shareholder. I am also a personal shareholder. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.

Mr. Kent, in America today, a record 47 million Americans receive government handouts through the Supplement Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Most people see this as a tragedy; apparently Coca-Cola sees it as a business opportunity. What a shame.

According to estimates, American taxpayers subsidize the purchase of about \$4 billion worth of soda annually. I have no problem with anyone drinking as much soda as they want. But taxpayers should not be forced to subsidize these lifestyle choices, and large companies such as Coca-Cola should not lobby federal and state governments to ensure ever more taxpayer dollars flow towards sugary sodas. Coca-Cola has consistently fought efforts to limit SNAP funds for these beverages including lobbying against legislative efforts in Florida and New York to exclude the purchase of soda with SNAP money. Why?

Our company sells a myriad of healthier drink options. From Minute Maid juices, to Odwalla beverages to Simply Orange unsweetened juice, Coca-Cola offers many products that promote a healthy lifestyle.

In a free market, Americans should be able to chose what they eat and drink and how much. That is why the company was right to fight against New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg's attempted ban on large beverages, but also why you are wrong to fight SNAP restrictions. SNAP funds do not operate in a free market. It is a gift of taxpayer money – a so-called benefit – so it is appropriate to place limits on how those benefits are administered and for what items.

So my question is: why do you think it is appropriate for taxpayers to subsidize the purchase of unhealthy soda and other sugary beverages when Coca-Cola sells many healthier beverages that those using taxpayer funds could purchase?

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