
A Deeper Look at Soda Taxes

Segment Length: 4:54 minutes; 4:51 minutes

Videos:

“Robert Reich: Soda Wars of Berkley, CA”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kAZaIadjY64>

“The Philly Soda Tax Scam”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tc1sEQ4YvG8>

Guide:

The questions below will help students achieve a better understanding of the arguments made on either side of a contentious topic. Because these questions often touch upon statements made briefly in the videos, we recommend reading the questions before watching each video.

Students are encouraged to take notes during the videos, and it may be helpful for students to break into groups, each taking responsibility for only a few questions, before coming together for discussion.

Analysis Questions:

1. In the first video Robert Reich tells us that taxing something to reduce its consumption is tried and true. Philadelphians told John Stossel that they refuse to buy soda in the city. Why might limiting purchases of soda in Philadelphia not limit consumption as much as it may seem to?
2. John Stossel says that liquor sales increased with the enactment of the soda tax in Philadelphia. How could a soda tax affect alcohol sales?
3. Why does Bernie Sanders disapprove of the soda tax?
4. Robert Reich claimed that the fight over Berkley’s soda tax was between regular people and corporate money. How does John Stossel portray those opposed to the soda tax in Philadelphia?
5. Philadelphia City Councilman William Greenlee and Robert Reich both support a soda tax, but for different reasons. What does each man hope to achieve with the tax? How could those goals be at odds with one another?
6. Robert Reich was asked during a phone survey whether he trusted the Berkley city government to spend the revenues from a soda tax wisely. How would John Stossel have responded?
7. Citing the example of cigarettes, Robert Reich says taxing soda will reduce its consumption. How might John Stossel point to Denmark in response?

8. Because sugary drinks are contributing to obesity and other health problems, Robert Reich tells us they should be taxed. Why would some Philadelphians, who presumably want to be healthy, oppose such a tax?
9. How does a soda tax affect consumer behavior according to John Stossel?