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**CA School Soda Ban Advances**

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Sacramento -- Legislation to ban most soda sales at public schools advanced Tuesday, but only after the bill's author agreed not to extend the restrictions to high school campuses.

The measure by state Sen. Deborah Ortiz, D-Sacramento, would ban the sale of soda pop at elementary, middle and junior high schools starting next year.

Sales would be prohibited only during school hours, and schools would still be free to sell fruit-based drinks, water, certain sport drinks and milk.

Ortiz said the bill, SB677, is needed to help curb childhood obesity and other health problems among children. She said there is increasing evidence that soda consumption is linked to obesity, bone fractures and osteoporosis.

Children now consume twice as much soda as milk, and soda consumption has almost doubled in the past 20 years. Ortiz said the school districts that have already decided to cut off soda sales, including Oakland, San Francisco and Los Angeles, have not suffered financially from changes in contracts with beverage companies.

"The student consumer still spends money. They simply are spending money on healthier products," Ortiz told the Assembly Health Committee.

Assembly Health Committee Chairman Dario Frommer, D-Los Feliz (Los Angeles County), said he would support the measure only if high schools were exempt. Ortiz's bill, which has already cleared the state Senate, was approved by the Assembly Health Committee and now moves to the Assembly Education Committee.

More than a dozen major health, education and school advocacy groups lined up in support of the legislation, while soft drink manufacturers and the California Chamber of Commerce opposed it.

"I just feel that kids in high school are young adults and they should be able to make some choices," said Frommer, noting that some 18-year-olds would be able to go to war but not buy a soda on campus.