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As Deadline Passes to Hear Assembly Bill 1163, Public Health Groups Condemn Big Soda's "Extortion" And "Gaming" of Legislature

Health Groups Praise Assemblymember Adrin Nazarian and Coauthors for Courage and Resolve to Keep Fighting Against Big Soda's Deceptive Tactics

(Sacramento, CA) Today, the deadline passed with no action on AB 1163, a bill that would overturn the statewide preemption on local sugary drink taxes. Passed in 2018, this measure was described by the Los Angeles Times as "extortion." Though the conventional policy deadline has passed for the year, Big Soda's 2018 "[extortion](#)" was done unconventionally and outside deadlines through a budget trailer bill and forced upon the Legislature. It can be similarly undone with a simple majority vote at nearly any time the Legislature is in session.

Public health groups united as Californians For Less Soda spoke out against the crooked tactics from Big Soda following a [Kaiser Health News report](#) showing about \$5.9 million in lobbying and contributions specifically made by the beverage industry. Assemblymember Adrin Nazarian said in the report that the soda industry was "gaming" the political system.

"Big Soda has no good excuse for their continued extortion of California since 2018, so Big Soda had to follow it up with \$5.9 million in hush-money payments to California politicians and lobbyists," said Xavier Morales, Executive Director of The Praxis Project, which is one of the public health groups represented by Californians for Less Soda.

Public health groups praised the courage of Assemblymember Nazarian, who along with Assembly Health Committee Chair Jim Wood and Assemblymembers David Chiu, Kevin McCarty and Richard Bloom, and Senator Scott Weiner, are coauthors of AB 1163. AB 1163 would overturn Big Soda's law, which has been described as an

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industry-supported voter control that stops local communities from standing up to the soda industry and passing local laws to reduce sugary drink consumption.

“The national dialogue right now has focused on holding those accountable who abuse and harm our communities, and that includes big soda. We are inspired by the courage of Assemblymember Nazarian and these five brave coauthors who are willing to keep fighting a soda industry, which spends millions of dollars in our State on predatory marketing campaigns that target communities of color and target our kids. This isn’t just a health issue. It is also a social justice issue as AB 1163 would have allowed power to be restored at the local level,” said Eric Batch, a Vice President of Advocacy with the American Heart Association, one of the founding members of Californians for Less Soda.

Californians for Less Soda has nicknamed the Assemblymember and his five legislative colleagues “Nazarian and the Fearless Five” because they aren’t scared of Big Soda and will keep working to persuade their colleagues to stand up and join them until they have a majority.

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Californians for Less Soda is proud to have the support of the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network; American Diabetes Association; American Heart Association; Asian Pacific Partners for Empowerment, Advocacy and Leadership; California Black Health Network; California Dental Association; Latino Coalition for a Healthy California; The Praxis Project; Public Health Advocates; Public Health Institute; Roots of Change; and Social Justice Learning Institute.