Option 1: Help People Lose Weight

We can’t wait for people to make better choices on their own because this growing problem affects all of us. We must provide active encouragement, and even take coercive measures, to effect the lifestyle changes necessary to deal with this threat.

- Insurance companies could charge higher rates for obese customers, as some already do for customers who smoke.
- Community health agencies or insurance companies could sponsor public service announcements (PSAs) that educate people about the health hazards associated with being obese.
- Individuals could lobby their children’s schools to remove vending machines full of unhealthy snacks.
- Employers could offer incentives to workers to lose weight by providing in-house exercise equipment or subsidizing gym or health club fees.

Examples of What Might Be Done

- People who are heavy but healthy, or who are genetically unable to reduce their weight, would be unfairly penalized.
- Because so many PSAs are aired already, this could actually turn people off. The people who could benefit from these messages may be the most likely to ignore them.
- This could leave some young children hungry and without energy. It might also drive more high school students to drop school during the day to buy the snacks they want.
- This could be an expensive proposition and businesses might pass the costs on to consumers or cut down on other employee benefits.

What else?

- Local governments can help lower-city stores purchase the equipment necessary to carry fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Some owners in other neighborhoods might consider it worth to help save businesses and not others.
- Farm subsidies on unhealthy ingredients could be eliminated.
- This could hurt business—and their employees—that have been struggling in good faith and have broken no laws.

Examples of What Might Be Done

- Stove would disproportionately affect poor people.
- This could hurt business and their employees that have been struggling in good faith and have broken no laws.
- These organizations might struggle to find items that are as popular. Pizzerias raise less money for school trips, playground equipment, and classroom supplies.
- People could make exercise part of their regular routine, even if it is only taking a daily walk around the block.

What else?

- Zoning rules could require that new residential developments include sidewalks, bike paths, and open space.
- Banks and investors could devise financing products that would support the development of walkable communities, with mixes of residential and commercial uses.
- Those amenities will raise the price of housing in those developments.
- Banks would be much more likely to finance such projects in high-end communities than in low-income areas where the need might be greater but the risk of losing money would be considerably higher.

Examples of What Might Be Done

- These strategies could be risky for people who live in dangerous neighborhoods.
- These strategies would require more physical activity during the school day.
- These strategies would increase the time spent on academics won’t help American students close the gaps in achievement between themselves and students in other countries.

What else?

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