

IN ALL FAIRNESS

WARNING: Beware of activists, plaintiffs' lawyers, and State AGs who use children and public health to attack free enterprise

Unfortunately, many special interests despise America's commerce and products. These professional ideologues and their allies are now focusing their agenda on the core of our free enterprise system – consumer information and advertising. They contemptuously assume that ordinary consumers are too dumb to make their own decisions. So we need to consider the source when the public is fed their nonstop advocacy products: lawsuits, regulatory petitions, press releases, and ad campaigns that would deny consumers and businesses free speech rights. Recent examples of speech-related assaults on "disfavored" products include:

- Center for Science in the Public Interest petitioned FDA to compel soft drink producers to print alarming messages on their products warning of supposed dire health consequences.
- Medical product makers were sued and prosecuted for their speech activities. Their transgression: sharing research with doctors for their patients about uses of medicine, devices, and procedures that save lives.
- The Attorney General of California and friendly plaintiffs' lawyers sued under the state's Proposition 65 law to impose warnings on French fries, potato chips, and other fast foods for containing a naturally occurring substance that after being force fed to lab rats in massive doses might be hazardous.
- New Prohibition activists bombard us with junk social science-based studies on underage consumption, and then use them to lobby state officials to severely restrict or ban beer and alcohol ads.

These attacks on speech have little to do with protecting us. If consumer protection were the real goal, then special interest ideologues would applaud businesses' vigorous self-regulation of their advertising, and advocate viable, non-censorship solutions such as increased enforcement of underage drinking laws and more education on healthy food.

Wearied consumers are exhausted by the rantings of organized elitists who want to tell us how to live our lives. These supersized interests jealously guard their own right to outrageously include business targets in their latest hysterical scare of the week campaign. Such tactics don't make Americans healthier, safer, or wiser.

Instead of dumbing down America through activism, why not focus our efforts on real problems we face and produce drugs and vaccines to deal with pandemics, bioterrorism, and cancer. These are critical challenges that make the radical causes of self-anointed consumer advocates look petty and hopelessly irrelevant.

The First Amendment allows activists the freedom to say whatever they want about public health, medicine, food, beverages, and free enterprise. The rest of us are just as free not to listen to them.



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