nutrition and activity programs for city youth.

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Now it's time for San Francisco to take its turn in the sugary beverage battle.

Supervisor Scott Wiener plans this week to introduce a ballot measure that would set a tax on sugary beverages. The proceeds would fund health, nutrition and activity programs for city youth.

Wiener's proposal would levy a tax of 24 cents on each can of soda sold in the city, where fast-food restaurants are already prohibited from handing out free toys in kids' meals high in fat, salt and sugar.

Similar tax measures were defeated last year across the bay in Richmond and in the Los Angeles County town of El Monte, after the beverage industry spent millions of dollars to kill the proposals.

And New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg's attempt to ban the sale of sugary beverages larger than 16 ounces has been halted by the courts.

But Wiener said a mounting body of research has documented the link between sugary beverages and obesity and diabetes — and that voters are willing to tax the sweet drinks if they know that the money will help keep kids healthy. A statewide Field Poll released earlier this year found that 68 percent of voters would support a soda tax if the proceeds went toward improving nutrition and fitness programs in schools.

Wiener's proposal would add a tax of 2 cents per ounce on all sugar-sweetened beverages, defined as drinks with 25 or more calories that have added sugary sweeteners and are less than 50 percent fruit or vegetable juice. The money would go toward health and exercise programs at city schools, recreation centers and

pull all the shenanigans they have pulled elsewhere — but we have a strong coalition behind this. San Francisco is always at the forefront of public health issues and trying to find innovative ways to keep the city healthy."

Wiener said Richmond's proposal — which was handily defeated by 67 percent of voters — "was too easy to attack" because it did not require that the money be spent on health programs.

"This was carefully crafted to ensure the money is spent on nutrition, physical activity and health — and that it's not used as a replacement," for existing public health dollars, he said.

The Hospital Council of Northern and Central California and other health groups have already endorsed the idea of a soda tax. Dr. Kirsten Bibbins-Domingo, a UCSF professor of medicine, epidemiology and biostatistics, studied the potential effects of a national tax on sugar-sweetened beverages.

"We concluded that adding a penny-per-ounce tax on sweetened beverages could potentially prevent 240,000 cases of diabetes per year, and additionally avoid 100,000 cases of heart disease, 8,000 strokes, and 26,000 deaths over the next decade," she said.

The funds would be earmarked specifically for "active" recreation programs at the city's Recreation and Park Department; lunch, nutrition, physical education and after-school activities at the San Francisco Unified School District; and food access and activity programs funded by the city's Public Health Department and the Department of Children, Youth and their Families.

Wiener noted that one can of soda contains as much as 10 teaspoons of sugar — more than the six to nine teaspoons recommended for adults per day by the American Heart Association.