



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on April 28, 2011

## Federal Bureaucrats Target Kids' Cereal

Federal bureaucrats are at it again, interjecting themselves into affairs that should be of no concern to them. The latest overreach involves new federal guidelines which may limit the marketing to children of sugary breakfast cereals — so-called “unhealthy products.”

According to the Associated Press, the guidelines mandate that companies are permitted to market to children between the ages of 2 and 17 only if their products are low in fat, sugar, and sodium and contain specified healthy ingredients.



*The Blaze* writes:

The guidelines set parameters that are stricter than many companies have set for themselves and, if the companies agree, would eliminate much of the advertising consumers see today — on television, in magazines, in stores and on the Internet — for foods that appeal to children.

If many companies sign on to the guidelines, children could see much less of the colorful cartoon characters used to advertise cereals or other gimmicks designed to draw their attention. Under the guidelines, if the companies wanted to continue that advertising, they would have to reduce unhealthy ingredients in their products.

The new guidelines are the result of a 2009 order from Congress, which directed the Federal Trade Commission, the Agriculture Department, the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the Food and Drug Administration to develop recommendations regarding food marketing.

The bill calling for the guidelines was authored by Senator Tom Harkin (D-Iowa), who was reportedly pleased with the recommendations. “Kids are being bombarded daily with ads for unhealthy foods and it is long past time that we limit the amount of junk food advertising,” he commented.

The guidelines apply to all food promotions available to children, including celebrity endorsements, text messages, and product placement in video games.

Again, *The Blaze*:

Specifically, the agencies recommend that companies only market foods that have a significant amount of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat milk products, fish, extra lean meat, eggs, nuts, seeds or beans. Foods that have any trans-fat, more than 1 gram of saturated fat, 13 grams of added sugars or 210 milligrams of sodium in a serving would not be eligible for marketing to children under the guidelines.

The recommendation emphasizes that the focus should be on breakfast cereals, restaurant and snack foods, and carbonated beverages.

There has already been a dramatic reduction in the number of television ads targeting children, while an increase in marketing to children can be found in magazines, on the Internet, and via social media



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sites. However, according to federal regulators, the food industry has not done enough.

The proposed guidelines are open for public comment until the start of the summer, according to the agencies, “to encourage a marketing environment that supports, rather than undermines, parents’ efforts to get their children to eat more healthfully.”

Whether companies will actually sign on to the new guidelines remains to be seen; however, McDonald's, General Mills, Inc., Kellogg Co., Kraft Foods Global, and PepsiCo, Inc. have already joined an effort to limit marketing to children that was sponsored by the Better Business Bureau, whose standards are similar to the new guidelines, though not as strict.

The efforts all seem to fall in line with First Lady Michelle Obama’s [campaign](#) against childhood obesity. In fact, Michelle Obama has been encouraging food companies not only to make healthier foods for children, but also to reduce their marketing to children. In a March 2010 speech to the Grocery Manufacturers Association, she insisted, “We need you not to just tweak around the edges but entirely rethink the products you are offering.”

Still, despite the seemingly innocuous intentions of the First Lady and this administration, one has to wonder where the federal government finds the constitutional right to regulate what private companies produce and how they market those products. Furthermore, many analysts believe that this is yet another attempt by the federal government to usurp parental rights.



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