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To Gulp or to Sip? Debating a Crackdown on Big Sugary Drinks

By **ANEMONA HARTOCOLLIS**

Gas guzzlers, McMansions, Walmart, Costco: If one thing is certain about American consumer culture it is that bigger is better, especially if it is cheaper.

So more than a few New Yorkers took it especially hard Thursday when they learned that Mayor **Michael R. Bloomberg** wanted to take away their plus-size sodas in restaurants, movie theaters, stadiums, arenas and mobile food carts, as a way, he said, of fighting **obesity**.

Patrick Piatt, 48, and Linda Perez, 46, who were eating at a McDonald's on 125th Street in Harlem, said they got more value by buying a 20-ounce lemonade, which would be four ounces too many once the new rules take effect. "For him to dictate, he's outstepping his bounds," Ms. Perez said. Mr. Piatt said that Mr. Bloomberg was looking down on them: "This is a man who has two standards. One for him and one for everyone else."

Another diner, Monica Dauphine, 44, who was sharing a 32-ounce Sprite, gave the mayor credit for his good intentions, but said: "You can't force it. It's like dictatorship. I'm sorry, but if you want to be obese, you want to be obese."

Some health experts said there might be some correlation between restrictions on soft drinks — many locales, including New York, already ban or limit them from schools — and a leveling off, or in some places even a decline, in childhood obesity. But one researcher whose work was cited by City Hall in defense of the policy said in an interview Thursday that he did not think it would work.

The proposed ban — the first in the nation — would prohibit the sale of any cup or bottle of sweetened drink larger than 16 fluid ounces, though consumers would not be prohibited from getting refills or multiple servings. It would apply to virtually an entire gamut of drinks including energy drinks and iced teas, but not to **diet** sodas, fruit juices, dairy drinks and alcoholic beverages, or to beverages sold in groceries or convenience stores. It would take effect in March 2013, after public hearings.