

Maine Gov. LePage threatens to halt food stamp program amid sugar crackdown | Fox News

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Nov. 13, 2015: Maine Governor Paul LePage speaks at the 23rd Annual Energy Trade and Technology Conference in Boston, Massachusetts. (Reuters)

Maine Gov. Paul LePage is ramping up a battle over Mars bars and Mountain Dew, warning the Obama administration he'll move to ban food stamp recipients in his state from buying such sugary sweets with taxpayer money – or halt the program entirely.

The warning comes after the Obama administration shot down his request for a waiver to institute the ban on candy and sugary drinks.

The firebrand Republican wrote to U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack objecting vociferously to the agency's decision. In the June 17 letter, LePage called the ban "a commonsense proposition."

Citing Maine's rising obesity and diabetes rates, LePage said he will look "to implement reform unilaterally or cease Maine's administration of the food stamp program altogether."

"It's time for the federal government to wake up and smell the energy drinks," wrote LePage, who went on to accuse the Obama administration of a double standard in the way it polices school cafeterias, but not how taxpayer money is used on the food stamp program.

“The Obama administration goes to great lengths to police the menus of K-12 cafeterias but looks the other way as billions of taxpayer dollars finance a steady diet of Mars bars and Mountain Dew,” LePage said. “I can think of only one reason why the federal government would refuse to eliminate junk food from the EBT menu: special interests.”

LePage noted that only 31 percent of Mainers eat the recommended amount of vegetables. He says that taxpayers are also paying for the consequences of poor eating habits because most SNAP recipients also receive Medicaid.

“Beyond the health effects of the federal government’s corrupt food stamp policy is the tragedy of billions in wasted taxpayer dollars that buy candy and soda through a program that was originally designed to reduce hunger. Maine taxpayers see it every day at the grocery store and they are sick and tired of watching their hard-earned money go down the drain,” LePage said.

The LePage administration made the request in November after his proposal was rejected twice by the Maine Legislature, according to [The Bangor Daily News](#).

State Rep. Drew Gattine, a Democrat, told The Daily News he felt the governor was looking for a fight with the Obama administration.

“This just seems to me to be just the governor trying to pick a fight with the feds,” said Gattine. “Nobody thinks that people on food stamps should be buying snack food and candy and sugary drinks. What we really need to do is find a way to make healthy food more affordable.”

The Associated Press contributed to this report.