

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:
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Commercial Alert Criticizes National PTA Over Coke Sponsorship

Today, Commercial Alert sent a letter to National PTA President Shirley Igo, regarding Coca-Cola's sponsorship of the National PTA. Commercial Alert is a national nonprofit organization that opposes commercialism. The letter follows.

Dear Ms. Igo:

Since its founding in 1897, the National PTA has stood strong for the health and well-being of American children, and has sought to advance these in a multitude of ways. It has sought to reduce infant mortality, curb the spread of infectious disease, and improve child nutrition, among many other things.

And well it should. The National PTA's statement of mission and purpose includes "support[ing] and speak[ing] on behalf of children and youth in the schools," and "promot[ing] the welfare of the children and youth."

Now it appears that the National PTA has turned its back on this admirable history. Regrettably, the PTA has embraced Coca-Cola Enterprises as a "proud sponsor." The PTA even features the Coca-Cola logo in many places on its website, including at <http://www.pta.org/aboutpta/index.asp> and <http://www.pta.org/aboutpta/sponsors.asp>.

Instead of promoting the welfare of children, the National PTA is promoting the welfare of a corporation that seeks to fill them with sugar and caffeine.

As you know, American children are suffering from an epidemic of obesity and type 2 diabetes. There is a direct link between soda consumption and childhood obesity. According to a recent study in the *Lancet*, the likelihood of "becoming obese among children increased 1.6 times for each additional can or glass of sugar-sweetened drink that they consumed every day."

Despite this, throughout the country, many school boards and administrators have put schoolchildren up for sale to the highest commercial bidder. Companies such as Channel One, Coca-Cola and PepsiCo have purchased direct access to a captive audience of impressionable children, through the schools. This is despite the negative effects on children's health, values and education.

The National PTA should be a voice opposing this decay in public values, morality and health. It should not be an enabler and accomplice in the trend.

We urge you to give back Coca-Cola's money. Then the National PTA will be able to speak with an uncompromised voice about health effects of junk food, and carry out its worthy mission.

It is important for the National PTA to lead by example. The integrity of your organization is vital to the well-being of the children of America, and it should not be for sale.

Sincerely,

Gary Ruskin, Executive Director

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Commercial Alert is a national nonprofit organization whose mission is to keep the commercial culture within its proper sphere, and to prevent it from exploiting children and subverting the higher values of family, community, environmental integrity and democracy.

Commercial Alert has more than 2000 members, representing all 50 states and the District of Columbia. For more information, visit our website at <http://www.commercialalert.org>.

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