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Huntsman Research on Soda-related "Sin Taxes" Makes National News

U.S. News and World Report recently published an opinion article authored by two Huntsman professors on the drawbacks of soda-related "sin taxes."

The article was co-authored by Huntsman professors William F. Shughart II and Michael D. Thomas, along with Adam J. Hoffer of the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. Dr. Shughart is the J. Fish Smith Professor in Public Choice, and Dr. Thomas is a clinical assistant professor.

The article was sparked by a research paper the three wrote that was recently published by the Mercatus Center at George Mason University.

The authors write that sin taxes — taxes on items and behaviors such as alcohol, tobacco, and gambling — are gaining popularity, especially in regard to soft drinks and junk food, in the hope of thwarting obesity trends.

The authors argue that the new justifications for taxing sin are based on paternalistic notions that "experts" can make better choices for consumers than they can make for themselves.

While sin taxes might influence some people to reduce their "bad behavior," there are a number of costs to sin taxes that outweigh their benefits, the authors write. They assert that the millions of dollars spent by the soft drink industry and other sin tax targets to prevent existing taxes from being mandated is money wasted. The authors also write that sin taxes are regressive because the people they hit hardest are those who have the fewest options — the poor.

The research done by Dr. Shughart and Dr. Thomas has already been cited in several national publications including *The Daily Caller.com* and *American Spectator*.

William Shughart II (left) and Michael Thomas co-authored an opinion piece about soda-related "sin taxes" in *U.S. News and World Report*.