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**EDITORIAL: Yes on Prop. 37**

AUGUST 30, 2012 12:00 AM • BY NORTH COUNTY TIMES AND THE CALIFORNIAN OPINION ~~CITY CLERK~~ <sup>DEPUTY</sup> ① 13

Proposition 37 is as common-sense a measure as Californians have had a chance to approve in quite some time.

The "Genetically Engineered Foods Labeling" measure would quite simply allow consumers the choice of whether to eat --- or, more to the point, avoid --- genetically engineered foods.

By requiring producers to label food that contains genetically modified ingredients, Prop. 37 will give California families the information they need to make informed decisions on their purchases.

With such a wide swath of Californians having concerns about genetically modified food, for both philosophical and practical reasons, it seems to us that Prop. 37 represents a reasonable balance between the interests of consumers and businesses.

While opponents of Prop. 37 are trying to portray this measure as some kind of Orwellian Big Brother overregulation, that breathless hype is tough to square with the measure's actual wording. There is nothing in Prop. 37 that limits the ability of researchers, producers, farmers or ranchers to grow and raise genetically modified crops and animals, nor to sell them at the grocery store.

And the labels don't insinuate that genetically modified foods are unsafe. They will simply state that the product in the package contains genetically modified food.

Foes of Prop. 37 are also pointing to the ballot measure's provision that no genetically modified foods can be labeled "natural." However, it's hard to see how an ear of corn that has had mouse or fish genes grafted into its DNA can reasonably be labeled "natural" in the first place.

Will this raise the cost of food products sold in California, as opponents of the measure are charging?

Perhaps incrementally, at first, as new packaging with the labels is implemented. But earlier requirements for other kinds of mandatory labeling were greeted with gloom-and-doom predictions that never turned out as bad as we were warned.

Besides, with the tens of millions of dollars that opponents of Prop. 37 are raising, it's not as if California voters won't well know the potential costs for the food if the measure passes.

We believe that slightly higher costs in the short term are well worth the long-term benefits of a more fully informed citizenry, particularly with a product as inherently intimate as food, and on an issue as deeply controversial as genetic engineering.

People have a fundamental right to know what they are putting in their bodies --- a principle that has stood the test of time, from truth-in-labeling laws to food-safety programs.

Prop. 37 is consistent with this tradition of holding our food producers to the highest standards of quality and disclosure, and of giving purchasers of food as much information as reasonably possible about the products they are considering.

We urge a "Yes" vote on Prop. 37.