

*The physician and health advocate voice for a world free from nuclear threats
and a safe, healthy environment for all communities.*

September 19, 2012



Physicians for Social Responsibility
Los Angeles

Honorable Herb J. Wesson, Jr.
Chair, Rules, Elections and Intergovernmental Relations Committee
200 N. Spring Street, Room 430
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Re: SUPPORT Resolution on Proposition 37, CA Right to Know Genetically Engineered Food Act

Dear Council President Wesson,

On behalf of the 5,000 members and supporters of Physicians for Social Responsibility-Los Angeles (PSR-LA), I am writing to express support for Proposition 37 – The California Right to Know Genetically Engineered Food Act. PSR-LA is a nonprofit physician and health advocate organization founded in 1980, working to protect public health from toxic threats to the environment. We urge you to support the LA City Council resolution authored by Councilmember Paul Koretz, which supports Proposition 37, a California ballot initiative which, if approved by voters in November, will establish mandatory food labeling requirements for genetically-engineered (GE) foods.

At issue is the fundamental right consumers have to make informed choices about the food they eat and the food they feed to their children. Labeling foods does not imply a product is unsafe or will be confusing to consumers as some may argue. The FDA requires the labeling of over 3,000 ingredients, additives, and processes; providing basic information does not confuse the public, it empowers them to make choices. Up to 80% of the food on U.S. supermarket shelves contains GE ingredients, but without labeling we don't know what we're eating or feeding our children.

Just today, the first-ever, peer-reviewed long-term animal study on the health effects of genetically engineered (GE) foods was released (Séralini, G.-E., et al. Long term toxicity of a Roundup herbicide and a Roundup-tolerant genetically modified maize. Food Chem. Toxicol. (2012) <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.fct.2012.08.005>). These researchers are reporting major health problems, including mammary tumors and kidney and liver damage, in the animals that were fed GE corn over a two-year period. More research is needed, yet in the meantime, we have a right to know and choose for ourselves whether we want to gamble with our health by eating GE foods that have been inadequately studied and have not been proven safe.

Moreover, we do know that GE crops increase the use of pesticides and herbicides, thereby increasing risk of exposure and harm to farmworkers, their families, and consumers. For example, Roundup Ready® soybeans, alfalfa, corn, cotton, spring canola, sugarbeets and winter canola are genetically modified to resist spraying of the herbicide glyphosate, which can then be applied to weeds without harming the crop. Intensive pesticide application leads to a cycle of dependence; pesticide-resistant weeds develop and require more frequent spraying of stronger chemicals.

Fifty countries with over 40% of the world's population already label GE foods, including the entire European Union, Russia and China. Both Los Angeles and California should lead the United States on this important issue. We urge you to support California Proposition 37 – a critical right-to-know initiative. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (213) 689-9170.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ana Mascareñas', with a stylized, cursive script.

Ana Mascareñas
Policy and Communications Director
Physicians for Social Responsibility-Los Angeles
amascarenas@psr-la.org | (213) 689-9170