

HOLLYWOOD  
FOOD  
GUILD

Date: 10/16/15  
Submitted in Rules Committee  
Council File No: 15-0002-S84  
Item No.: 6  
: Communication from  
the Public

Rules, Elections, Intergovernmental Relations, and Neighborhood Committee  
Councilmember Herb J. Wesson, Jr., Chair  
Councilmember Jose Huizar  
Councilmember Marqueece Harris-Dawson  
Friday, October 16, 2015  
9:00 AM  
Room 340, John Ferraro Council Chamber

Dear Councilmembers:

My name is Maria Juur and I represent Hollywood Food Guild, a partner of Center for Food Safety – we are a national public advocacy organization protecting food, farms and the environment.

I strongly support this resolution (item number 15-0002-S84) in opposition of HR1599.

Over the past three years, over 30 states have introduced bills or ballot initiatives to require the labeling of genetically engineered (GE) foods and three states – Connecticut, Maine and Vermont – have passed mandatory GE labeling laws. Despite this massive push for GE labeling by states across the country, the so-called Safe and Accurate Food Labeling Act (H.R. 1599), would prohibit any current or future state law requiring the labeling of GE foods while at the same time dramatically undercut the ability of states or local governments to regulate GE crops. Specifically, the bill as reported out of the House.

Agriculture Committee on July 14, 2015 seeks to:

- Preempt states from labeling GE foods and enforcing existing labeling laws;
- Prohibit any state or local oversight of GE crops intended to safeguard farmers and communities, even when the federal government has declined or failed to regulate them;
- Redefine genetic engineering altogether to exclude new, potentially risky GE methods;
- Severely weaken already feeble federal regulation of GE crops at USDA and FDA;
- Prohibit FDA's ability to craft a true, national GE labeling system;
- Continue the current use of misleading "natural" claims while FDA decides how to define it; and
- Create a new taxpayer funded USDA certification program for non-GMO foods where the private sector has already borne the cost of creating a non-GMO program based on international standards.

***You support this resolution and demonstrate opposition to H.R. 1599 because:***

**All Americans deserve to know what's in their food.** The labeling of GE foods is supported by 93% of Americans. Nearly 1.4 million Americans have joined a petition urging FDA to require labeling of GE foods. Congress should heed the call by consumers for mandatory labeling, not oppose it.

**Voluntary labeling will not work.** It has been over 13 years since FDA approved voluntary GE labeling, and zero companies have voluntarily disclosed the presence of GE ingredients in their products. The voluntary labeling of non-GE foods and organic foods is a marketing tool limited to only 2% of products on the shelves and is not a substitute for mandatory disclosure.

**GE labeling is constitutional and strong precedent exists to do so.** On April 27, 2015, the U.S. District Court for the District of Vermont issued its decision largely affirming the constitutionality of Vermont's GE food labeling law, Act 120. FDA already requires the labeling of nearly 4,000 ingredients, additives, and processes. For instance, whether orange juice is from concentrate or whether food has been irradiated are currently communicated to consumers via labels required by FDA.

**Companies can label GE foods without increasing food prices.** According to a recent study by independent food-marketing expert Kai Robertson, changes to a food manufacturer's product labels have not been found to affect the prices paid by shoppers.

**State and local government regulation of GE crops is legal and warranted.** Many local government ordinances restricting GE crops have been in place for over a decade, in states such as California, Oregon, Washington, and Hawaii. These have passed democratically and are intended to protect farmers and communities from economic, environmental and public health risks.

Thank you,

Maria Juur