



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on July 24, 2015

## House Passes Bill Blocking State Requirements for GMO Labeling

As predicted, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the innocuously titled “Safe and Accurate Food Labeling Act of 2015,” which prohibits states from issuing mandatory labeling laws for foods containing genetically modified organisms (GMOs), in yet another incredible show of federalism run amuck.



The bill, H.R. 1599, requires a national standard for labeling laws related to GMOs, which would not require food companies to disclose their use of genetically modified ingredients. Under the bill, companies that want to indicate that the product is “GMO-free” may still do so. But even then, the bill outlaws any non-GMO claim unless it has been approved through a new certification process created by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

An editorial on CNN’s website recognizes that this is merely a means to undermine competition by making it difficult for companies and individuals to differentiate their products from the chemical-ridden products that many food companies sell: “Given that it took the department more than a decade to establish similar certifications for organic foods, this would effectively stop farmers and food companies from advertising the purity of their own food.”

Passed by a vote of 275-150, the bill overturns state GMO-labeling laws, blocks the FDA from ever implementing mandatory GE food labeling, and allows food companies to continue to make misleading “natural” claims for foods that contain GE ingredients.

The bill, which has been dubbed the Denying Americans the Right to Know Act, or Dark Act, by critics who contend the bill is part of a wholesale effort to keep Americans in the dark about what’s in their food, was authored by Representative Mike Pompeo, who opined that mandatory labeling laws are futile and costly.

“Precisely zero pieces of credible evidence have been presented that foods produced with biotechnology pose any risk to our health and safety,” Pompeo said. “We should not raise prices on consumers based on the wishes of a handful of activists.”

But credible scientists have disputed the safety of genetically modified foods.

To create GMOs, the DNA from one or more species is added to the DNA of a particular crop so that it gains certain desirable traits, such as the ability to tolerate pesticides. Monsanto is the largest producer of genetically modified seeds in the world and is the leading producer of the herbicide glyphosate,



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which is marketed under the Roundup brand.

Findings by the Argentinian Federation of Health professionals have labeled glyphosate as a carcinogen. "Glyphosate not only causes cancer. It is also associated with increased spontaneous abortions, birth defects, skin diseases, and respiratory and neurological disease," reported the Argentinian Federation of Health professionals.

Likewise, the World Health Organization has called glyphosate a "probable human carcinogen."

Even without these claims calling into question the safety of consuming GMOs, it was entirely premature to call GMOs safe as they have not been properly studied by the Food and Drug Administration.

According to the Institute for Responsible Technology, new types of food substances must typically undergo extensive testing, including long-term animal feeding studies, when they are introduced, unless they are deemed "generally recognized as safe" (GRAS). In order to be deemed as such, the substance must undergo substantial peer-reviewed published studies and there must be an overwhelming consensus among the scientific community. But in 1992, the FDA declared that genetically modified crops are GRAS as long as the producers say they are, reports the Institute for Responsible Technology, which adds, "A company can even introduce a GM food to the market without telling the agency."

Who better to trust on the quality of a product than the company that created the product and hopes to profit from it?

Besides the health concerns related to GMOs, opponents contend that efforts to mask what is inside consumer foods violates Americans' rights.

Consumer groups, and Democrats in the House including Peter DeFazio (Ore.) and Rosa DeLauro (Conn.), led the opposition against the bill. "American families deserve to know what they are eating and feeding to their children," DeLauro told reporters Wednesday. "The FDA already requires clear labeling of over 3,000 ingredients, additives and food processes. GMOs should be no different."

Efforts by critics in the House to water down the bill failed, according to *The Hill*:

The House rejected two Democratic amendments to enhance GMO-labeling requirements. One offered by DeLauro, which failed 163-262, would have banned the use of the term "natural" on food that contains a genetically engineered plant. Another proposal from DeFazio that would have forced any U.S. company that labels a product as containing GMOs in a foreign country to label the equivalent product the same way in the U.S. went down by a vote of 123-303.

A third amendment offered by Rep. Jared Huffman (D-Calif.) that would have given Native American tribes the authority to prohibit or restrict the cultivation of GMO crops on tribal lands failed 196-227.

Lawmakers defending the bill argue a federal standard is easier than multiple state standards. "A patchwork of confusing state specific laws related to GMO labeling risks further confusion in the marketplace and rising food costs," the Democratic Blue Dog Coalition said in a statement.

But avoiding confusion is never an appropriate excuse for operating outside of the Constitution. Moreover, a large part of manufacturing America, including food companies, changes its packaging on a daily or hourly basis to accommodate different customers' desires or varied advertising campaigns, so changing them for different states is likely not much of a technical or cost issue, especially since that information could be put on every package.



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As there is no power in the Constitution for the U.S. Congress to make laws regulating food labeling, this is yet another example of the federal government overreach and of Congress believing itself to know better about what the American people want than the American people do. After all, the bill bans states from introducing mandatory labeling for GMO foods, even if the voters demand it via ballot measure.

The Center for Food Safety, which launched a major campaign in an effort to defeat the bill, sent an e-mail to its supporters following the vote wherein it accused members of Congress of bowing to the pressures of big corporations. “Big food and chemical corporations such as Monsanto have hired high-priced lobbyists who pressured Congress into passing a law that will rescind GE food labeling laws passed in Vermont, Connecticut and Maine and nullify over 135 state and local regulations that restrict the use of GE crops or pesticides,” the e-mail reads.

The Safe and Accurate Food Labeling Act now heads for a vote in the Senate, where opponents of the measure are hoping to defeat it. “This House was bought and paid for by corporate interests,” said Scott Faber, senior vice president of government affairs for the Environmental Working Group, a nonprofit advocacy organization.

Passage in the House, Faber contends, was a foregone conclusion. The Senate, he hopes, is another story. Those who wish to increase transparency and restore constitutional limitations on the federal government are encouraged to contact their [senators](#) and tell them to vote “no” on the Safe and Accurate Food Labeling Act.



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