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# California Ballot Initiative to Require Labeling of Genetically Engineered Foods Submitted to Attorney General

*Wide-Ranging Coalition Seeks to Secure Initiative on November 2012 Ballot*

SACRAMENTO, CA – Today, the grassroots [Committee For the Right to Know](#) and a wide-ranging coalition of consumer, public health and environmental organizations, food companies, and individuals submitted the [California Right to Know Genetically Engineered Food Act](#) to the State Attorney General for title and summary, prior to circulation as an initiative measure for the November 2012 election.

The initiative would require genetically engineered foods (also known as Genetically Modified Organisms, or GMOs) and foods containing GMO ingredients to be clearly labeled, similar to current labels with other nutritional information.

Genetically engineered food is usually plant or meat product that has had its DNA artificially altered in a lab with genes from other plants, animals, viruses, or bacteria, in order to produce foreign compounds

in that food. This genetic alteration is experimental, and is not found in nature.

The risk of genetically engineered foods is unclear, and unlike the strict safety evaluations required for the approval of new drugs, the safety of genetically engineered foods for human consumption has not been adequately tested. Recent studies show that genetically engineering food can create new, unintended toxic substances and increase allergies, cancer risks, and other health problems, especially for children. Experts agree that by labeling genetically engineered food, we can help identify foods that cause health problems.

“Because the FDA has failed to require labeling of GMO food, this initiative closes a critical loophole in food labeling law. It will allow Californians to choose what they buy and eat and will allow health professionals to track any potential adverse health impacts of these foods,” says Andy Kimbrell, Director of the Center for Food Safety.

The two most common genetically engineered traits are the expression of an insecticide in the tissue of “Bt Corn” and the expression of a compound in “Roundup Ready Soy” which enables high doses of Monsanto’s Roundup® weed killer to be sprayed while the plant survives. As much as 85% of corn in the U.S. is genetically engineered. BT Corn is currently regulated by the Environmental Protection Agency as an insecticide.

Robyn O’Brien, author and founder of the Allergy Kids Foundation says, “I support labeling genetically engineered foods because

allergy-sensitive people can exercise caution with essential information to make informed decisions about what they eat.” Fifty countries including the European Union and Japan have laws mandating that genetically engineered foods be labeled, but the United States does not have such a requirement. Public opinion polls indicate that over 90 percent of California voters support the labeling of genetically engineered foods.

Efforts to enact labeling laws in Congress and the California legislature have been blocked by big food and chemical company lobbyists. This measure will take the issue directly to the people to decide whether genetically engineered foods should be labeled.

“These genetically engineered foods have been allowed into our food supply without warning, and they aren’t labeled,” says Pamm Larry, founder of the grassroots movement and the Committee For the Right to Know. “The bottom line is Californians have a right to know what’s in the food we eat and feed our children. It’s time to send a strong, direct message to those who govern us, whether they be agency or elected, that we want genetically engineered foods labeled.”

The California Right to Know Genetically Engineered Food Act was carefully and specifically written to avoid any unnecessary burden or cost to consumers or producers. California voters are expected to have the chance to vote on the initiative in November 2012.