

**U.S. PUBLIC INTEREST RESEARCH GROUP (U.S. PIRG) – ARIZONA PIRG -
CALIFORNIA PIRG - ILLINOIS PIRG – MARYLAND PIRG -
MASSACHUSETTS PIRG**

July 14, 2016

Submitted Electronically

Hon. Barack Obama, President
White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Re: Veto Request – S.764 S.Amdt.4935
Bioengineered Food Disclosure Standard Act

Dear President Obama,

The U.S. Public Interest Research Group (PIRG) and the undersigned State PIRGs are writing to express our strong **opposition** to the recently passed Bioengineered Food Disclosure Standard Act, and urge you to exercise your Presidential veto powers when the legislation comes before you for signing.

The issue of labeling genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in food is not a new one. Our organization in collaboration with numerous farm, food and environmental organizations and businesses have been advocating for meaningful and transparent labeling of GMO foods and ingredients for many years, and in some cases, decades. The legislation recently passed by Congress falls far short of that standard and warrants your veto for the following reasons:

First, the legislation allows food companies the option to use off-package labeling to meet the proposed disclosure standard. This option is neither meaningful nor transparent. Only on-package labeling of GMO food and ingredients provide easily accessible information to the consumer. The use of QR codes or 800 telephone numbers to meet the requirements of a national GMO labeling standard is intentionally designed to thwart meaningful and transparent labeling. Additionally, the proposed use of QR codes discriminate against the elderly, the poor and rural residents who don't have the luxury of smart phones or reliable access to internet connections.

Second, the proposed legislation creates a novel definition of "bioengineering" instead of those that are well settled in law and practice, and, which according to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and many legal scholars, will exclude most foods currently considered to be GMO or include GMO ingredients. Thus, instead of providing more clarity to consumers seeking information on the food they buy, this legislation will blur existing distinctions between GMO and non-GMO products and result in more confusion to the consumer.

Finally, and perhaps most egregiously, the legislation will preempt state laws, like that of Vermont, that require food companies to provide transparent, meaningful on-package labeling of

all GMO foods and ingredients under commonly used and understood definitions of “bioengineering”.

For all of the afore-mentioned reasons, we ask that you veto S.764. Thank you for your consideration and support.

Sincerely,

Bill Wenzel
U.S. Public Interest Research Group (U.S. PIRG)

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Cc: Michelle Obama, First Lady