

Washington Initiative 522, 2012

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Washington Initiative 522 (I-522) "concerns labeling of genetically-engineered foods" and is a 2012 initiative to the Washington State Legislature.^[1] As certified by the Washington Secretary of State, it achieved enough signatures to be forwarded to the legislature for consideration during the 2013 session.^[2] The legislature did not vote on the initiative, so I-522 is on the November 5, 2013 general election ballot. If passed into law by voters, I-522 would take effect on July 1, 2015.

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Ballot title and summary

As described by the Secretary of State's office, the measure "would require most raw agricultural commodities, processed foods, and seeds and seed stocks, if produced using genetic engineering as defined, to be labeled as genetically engineered when offered for retail sale."

According to the official ballot measure summary

This measure would require foods produced entirely or partly with genetic engineering, as defined, to be labeled as genetically engineered when offered for retail sale in Washington, beginning in July 2015. The labeling requirement would apply generally to raw agricultural commodities, processed foods, and seeds and seed stock, with some exceptions, but would not require that specific genetically-engineered ingredients be identified. The measure would authorize state enforcement and civil penalties, and allow private enforcement actions.

Full text of the measure is available online at the Washington state website.^[3]

Provisions

I-522 is approximately nine pages long and adds a new chapter to Title 70 of the Revised Code of Washington.

Section one includes more than three pages stating various reasons for the initiative, related to religious belief, consumer health concerns, environmental concerns, economic concerns and worldwide trends in consumer labeling laws.

Section two establishes various definitions, including section 2(3)(a) which strictly defines "genetically engineered" by specific genetic engineering techniques, and differentiated from selective breeding. These specific genetic engineering techniques include various recombinant DNA and RNA methods such as micro-injection, electroporation, micro-encapsulation, liposome fusion, protoplast fusion or other "hybridization techniques that overcome natural physiological, reproductive or recombination barriers, where the donor cells or protoplasts do not fall within the same taxonomic family, in a way that does not occur by natural multiplication or natural recombination."

Section three requires that "any food offered for retail sale" be labeled "clearly and conspicuously" if it contains genetically-engineered ingredients, with certain exceptions.

Section four authorizes the Washington State Department of Health to "adopt rules necessary to implement" the law, with section five authorizing civil penalties for violations, section six noting that I-522 creates a new chapter for RCW Title 70 and section seven a basic severability clause.

Support

Support for the I-522 is coordinated by YES on 522, a group that includes food activists, small-scale producers and several food co-operatives such as PCC Natural Markets^{[4][5]} and natural food stores such as Whole Foods Market.^[6] It is also being promoted by the Organic Consumers Association, which has called for a boycott on Safeway Inc. unless the grocery store company withdraws from the Grocery Manufacturers Association and contributes financially to the Yes on 522 campaign.^[7] In addition to being the single largest donor, Dr Bronner's Magic Soaps issued a special label in support of I-522.^[8]

Opposition

Opposition to I-522 comes primarily from large chemical corporations, and organizations such as Washington Friends of Farms and Forests, Northwest Food Processors, Washington Association of Wheat Growers and the Washington State Farm Bureau.^{[9][10][11]} These large donations have reportedly "shattered" previous fundraising records against any other initiative, a full month ahead of the election.^[12]

Opposition has also come from the editorial boards of the Yakima Herald-Republic, The Seattle Times and Longview Daily News.^{[13][14][15]}

Donors

Public records of initiative donations are listed at the Washington State Public Disclosure Commission website.^[16] The largest contributors so far are Monsanto and DuPont Pioneer with \$4.6 and \$3.2 million in opposition, approaching the previous state record against a state-wide initiative.^{[17][18]} Dr Bronner's Magic Soaps is the largest single contributor in support, with a total of \$1.5 million.

See also

- California Proposition 37 (2012)
- Genetically modified food
- Selective breeding
- Taxonomic family

References

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External links

- Yes on 522 (<http://yeson522.com/>), campaign for I-522
- No on 522 (<http://voteno522.com/>), campaign against I-522
- RCW Title 70 "Public Health and Safety" (<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=70>)
- "What Washington Should Know about GMO's" (<http://www.seattleglobalist.com/2013/07/03/what-washington-should-know-about-gmos/14571>)

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