

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

R. BRUCE JOSTEN
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT
GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS

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July 22, 2015

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the world's largest business federation representing the interests of more than three million businesses of all sizes, sectors, and regions, as well as state and local chambers and industry associations, and dedicated to promoting, protecting, and defending America's free enterprise system, urges you to support H.R. 1599, the "Safe and Accurate Food Labeling Act of 2015." This bill would provide a uniform, national, and science-based framework for labeling food and ingredients that have, and have not, been modified through in vitro recombinant deoxyribonucleic acid techniques, commonly referred to as genetically engineered (GE).

Without H.R. 1599, American businesses that produce, process, and market food and ingredients across the country could be subject to state, and potentially even local, efforts to require specific labels for food sold within each jurisdiction. Such an outcome would be untenable and cost prohibitive for American businesses and likely raise the cost of food for America's most vulnerable populations. Additionally, those labeling efforts would not provide the consumer with any useful information. Indeed, process-based labels – those that simply disclose that a food or ingredient was produced using a GE process – do not inform the consumer of any health risk or benefit.

Moreover, without a national standard to define when a food or ingredient is GE-free, individual companies and organizations are creating their own "certifications," often without federal oversight. H.R. 1599 would ensure that GE-free foods could receive a proper evaluation and certification through a process administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

H.R. 1599 would require the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and USDA to work together to ensure GE food and ingredients are safe, provide a science-based labeling program in the event the agencies determine a label is necessary to protect public health and safety, and provide specific standards for products claiming to be GE-free. The Chamber supports mandatory labeling to protect and promote consumer health.

Importantly, H.R. 1599 would also require the agencies to publish all applications for approval of GE products, as well as FDA's and USDA's conclusions concerning each GE food and ingredient. This public disclosure would go a long way to help the public understand the science behind the products and the actual level of risk associated (or the lack thereof) with GE foods in the marketplace. Such transparency is critical to developing and maintaining consumer confidence.

The Chamber strongly supports H.R. 1599, a bipartisan bill that would create a uniform, national, and science-based framework for labeling GE and non-GE food and ingredients as necessary to protect public health and safety. **The Chamber urges you to support H.R. 1599 and may consider votes on, or in relation to, this bill in our annual *How They Voted* scorecard.**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. Bruce Josten". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "R." and last name "Josten" being the most legible parts.

R. Bruce Josten