

EXHIBIT 7

SELECTED NEWS MATERIALS

1. Meyers, Advocates: GMO Label Law Not Enforced, Times Argus, Feb. 2, 2006
2. Rathke, Genetically Engineered Seed Liability Bill Vetoed, Times Argus (via AP), May 16, 2006
3. Moats, GMO Labeling Bill Faces New Challenge, Times Argus, Mar. 30, 2012
4. Hallenbeck, The Great GMO Debate, Burlington Free Press, Apr. 23, 2012
5. Dritschilo, Shumlin: GMO Labeling Good, Bill Bad, Rutland Herald, Mar. 14, 2013
6. D'Ambrosio, With Vermont in Front, GMO Fight Heats Up, Burlington Free Press, June 9, 2013
(reformatted for spacing and to remove erroneous bold/underlining in original)
7. Tavis Smiley, Transcript of Interview with Governor Peter Shumlin, PBS.org, May 8, 2014
(reformatted from web version for printing)

NewsRoom

2/2/06 Times Argus (Montpelier-Barre, Vt.) (Pg. Unavail. Online)
2006 WLNR 25964377

Times Argus, The (Montpelier-Barre, VT)
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February 2, 2006

Section: NEWS

Advocates: GMO label law not enforced

J.C. Myers Times Argus Staff

Advocates and some legislators who want clear labeling of genetically engineered seeds claim the state is not adhering to the intent of a labeling law passed by the Legislature in 2004.

The state Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets has required no changes in labeling since the law went into effect, contending that existing language describing seed traits is enough to let farmers know when they are buying genetically modified products.

The Vermont Public Interest Research Group is using petitions and correspondence with agency Secretary Stephen Kerr to pressure him to initiate a legislative rulemaking process. This is an administrative procedure in which state agencies can spell out more clearly the boundaries and applications of a statute.

Kerr says his agency has followed both the letter and the intent of the labeling law, Act 97. The law requires that consumers be provided with information about genetically engineered materials. The law defines a genetically engineered seed or plant part as one that has been produced using a variety of methods, including cell fusion and recombinant DNA technology that influences its growth and development in ways that are “not possible under natural conditions or processes.”

Under the legislation, labeling must specify the identity and traits of the genetically engineered material, requirements for handling, contact point for further information, name and addresses of the manufacturer and the distributor of the materials.

Kerr said that current labeling practices meet those criteria. The law “does not require additional labels; therefore we have not required them,” he said.

This position is a change from Kerr’s earlier stance. In a 2004 e-mail to advocates, which was quoted in the Rutland Herald and The Times Argus, Kerr wrote that he would require companies that sell genetically engineered seeds in Vermont to include “a plain English disclosure” that “these seeds have been genetically engineered.”

Some legislators say that while the agency may be meeting the letter of the law, it is not remaining true to the agreements made about how it would be carried out. Rep. David Zuckerman, a Burlington Progressive who is chairman of the House Agriculture Committee, said “the secretary has chosen not to follow the intent of the law. He has chosen to be as lenient as possible to the (genetic engineering) industry.”

Kerr contends that the “technology-use contracts” that farmers sign to buy the seeds constitute the “labeling” that is required under the law. Kerr said there’s a key distinction between the words “label” and “labeling.”

”A requirement for a ‘label’ means a tag on every unit you sell. ‘Labeling’ means you provide information about your product,” he said.

Kerr said that “farmers are professionals, and they are more than educated to know what they are buying. There is an agreement they have to sign that they don’t have to sign for any other seeds.”The attorney general’s office has reviewed the issue and agreed. Assistant Attorney General Michael Duane, who does legal work for the agency, said the technology-use contracts that farmers sign to buy the seeds “very clearly meet the seven elements required under the statute - they meet the letter of the law.”

But Drew Hudson, field director for the Vermont Public Interest Group, disagrees. “To implement the law you need a clear label - just describing the seeds traits is not enough. If it doesn’t say ‘genetically engineered’ it doesn’t mean ‘genetically engineered,’” he said.

Hudson said VPIRG wants the agency to enter into rulemaking not only to improve the current labeling practices for commercial seeds, but because “hundreds of varieties” of genetically engineered vegetable seeds for the home gardener are already under development.

”Monsanto, one of the largest manufacturers of genetically engineered products has now purchased Seminis, a garden seed producer,” said Hudson. He says that genetically engineered garden seeds will soon be on the market and they should be labeled. “The regulatory rules should lead the market and protect the consumer,” he said.

Kerr, who said that a rulemaking process is unnecessary for the labeling of commercial farm

products, agreed that rulemaking will be necessary when genetically engineered products become available to the home gardener. “We may have to use symbols,” he said. “It will change with home gardeners.”

Kerr said that during the drafting of the labeling bill, the legislators intended that labels that specifically said “genetically engineered” would not be required.

However, Sen. Sara Kittell, D-Franklin, chairwoman of the Senate Agriculture Committee, and Zuckerman both remembered differently that the intent of the law was that some placard or sign should indicate to the commercial farmer that the seed is a genetically engineered product.

Duane, the assistant attorney general, said that if legislators are not satisfied that the law they wrote meets their intent, they can draft new language. But he added that caution should be exercised in drafting such language because some “plant incorporated protectants” are considered pesticides, and their labeling is regulated by the Environmental Protection Agency.

One of the reasons Kerr cited for not requiring labels is that asking manufacturers to change their tags for every unit would be onerous, and may violate interstate commerce statutes.

Zuckerman called that a red herring.

“We were asking them to use some sort of clear placard to indicate that the products on display are genetically engineered products,” he said “and not to label every bag. It’s not like there are so many seed dealers in Vermont so as to make that onerous.”

Zuckerman, who is himself an organic farmer, said that it is possible without clear and specific labeling for farmers to be provided with a genetically engineered seed and not know what they are getting. He says that farmers only sign a single document and get multiple deliveries of seed and in some cases, “you open a bag and it’s considered the same as signing a contract.”

Seed dealer Jacob Bourdeau of Sheldon disagreed.

“When a farmer orders the GM seeds he signs an agreement,” he said. Bourdeau is confident that any competent farmer or feed store worker could tell what seed they are delivering or planting, and would know if it was a genetically engineered seed just by reading the variety on the bag’s label. He admitted accidents could happen, but said the farmer would likely be responsible for any mix-up. “Sure, I could put diesel fuel in my car, but whose fault would that be?” he asked.

Zuckerman believes that the legislators were manipulated by genetic engineering industry lobbyists. “Frankly, we were naïve,” he said. “The other side knew well they could get around the language and do nothing. It’s extremely frustrating when you negotiate in good faith, and the

secretary interprets the law in a way that favors the industry.”

---- Index References ----

Company: PROGRESSIVE PRINT SOLUTIONS LTD; BURLINGTON COAT FACTORY REALTY OF ORLANDO INC; VIVAKI COMMUNICATIONS SA; PROGRESSIVE CAPITAL LTD; BURLINGTON BANK; MONSANTO SAS; TIMES ARGUS ASSOCIATION INC; PROGRESSIVE TRANSFER CORP; BURLINGTON COAT FACTORY REALTY OF CORAL SPRINGS INC; PROGRESSIVE CORP; BURLINGTON STREET SERVICES LTD; MONSANTO CO; MONSANTO ROMANIA SRL; PROGRESSIVE NORTHEASTERN INSURANCE CO; PROGRESSIVE; PROGRESSIVE DIGITAL MEDIA GROUP PLC; PROGRESSIVE GAMING INTERNATIONAL CORP; GREEN MEDICINE AB; BURLINGTON COAT FACTORY OF COLORADO LLC; PROGRESSIVE MEDICAL INC; PROGRESSIVE PLASTICS INC; DNA; PROGRESSIVE INSURANCE CO LTD; BURLINGTON BRIGHTON AND WHEATLAND TELEPHONE CO; PROGRESSIVE DIGITAL MEDIA LTD; CABINET GINESTIE MAGELLAN PALEY VINCENT; MOTORS LIQUIDATION CO

News Subject: (Legal (1LE33); Food & Beverage Laws (1FO27); Legislation (1LE97); Judicial (1JU36); Government (1GO80); Lobby & Pressure Groups (1LO18); Technology Law (1TE30); Regulatory Affairs (1RE51))

Industry: (Pharmaceuticals Regulatory (1PH03); Genetically Modified Foods (1GE75); Food & Beverage Production (1FO79); Food Technology (1FO81); Agriculture, Food & Beverage Regulatory (1AG56); Agricultural Biotechnology (1AG65); Food Safety & Testing (1FO17); Food & Beverage Regulatory (1FO94); Biotechnology (1BI78); Molecular & Cellular Biology (1MO84); Agricultural Crops (1AG44); Genetic Engineering (1GE23); Agriculture, Food & Beverage (1AG53); Pharmaceuticals & Biotechnology (1PH13); Biopharmaceuticals (1BI13); Science (1SC89); Science & Engineering (1SC33); Biomedical Engineering (1BI75); Agriculture (1AG63))

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Advocates: GMO label law not enforced, 2006 WLNR 25964377

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Section: NEWS

Genetically engineered seed liability bill vetoed

Lisa Rathke Associated Press

FAIRFIELD - Gov. James Douglas on Monday vetoed a bill that would have made seed manufacturers liable for damages caused by genetically engineered seeds that drift into the fields of farms that do not want to use them.

Douglas said the measure was unnecessary and divisive and would have caused manufacturers to raise prices or restrict the seed sales in Vermont.

"It is with regret that I veto this bill," Douglas said. "I greatly respect how passionate the arguments are around the issue of genetically engineered crops and the work of the Legislature in attempting a compromise. However, S.18 fails to find a middle ground between the competing interests, but instead dives into new legal territory that may only promote needless litigation that pits farmer against farmer and neighbor against neighbor."

The applause from the crowd of largely conventional dairy farmers showed how passionate the debate had become. Some farmers and consumers are opposed to the use of seeds that can be scientifically altered to resist pests or disease. Others say the seeds are needed to control pests and keep food affordable.

"What irritated me the most was the organic and conventional farmer were split. We'd always gotten along before," said Bernard Dubois who owns a 1,000-cow farm in Addison.

"With the obstacles that we face we certainly don't need to have our feed taken away from us or sold to us at an elevated price," said Bill Rowell, a dairy farmer in Sheldon.

Margaret Laggis, a lobbyist for the biotechnology industry, who opposed the bill, said her clients had not determined if they would change their seed sales if the bill had passed.

"All the companies were really looking at the issue of selling in that climate," she said.

Douglas said the discussion about the use of genetically engineered seeds in Vermont would continue. He said he'd asked the agriculture secretary to bring together conventional and organic farmers to try to resolve the issues related to the seeds' use.

"I look forward to working with the farming community in continuing this discussion," he said. Down the road following the veto, supporters of the bill gathered for their own press event and accused the administration of bowing to pressure from manufacturers.

"Gov. Douglas has chosen hypocrisy over democracy in siding with the chemical giants and not listening to the farmers," said Rep. Dexter Randall, P-Troy, the primary sponsor of the bill and a dairy farmer.

"This is a huge insult for the farm community of Vermont, only widening the gap between conventional and organic farmers," Randall said.

Advocates said they would continue to push for farmer protection from contamination from genetically engineered seeds.

"Go home and keep doing our work and keep talking about it and hopefully things are going to change," said Jack Lazor, of Butterworks Farm of Westfield, who produces organic yogurt, cream and grains.

---- Index References ----

News Subject: (Food & Beverage Laws (1FO27))

Industry: (Molecular & Cellular Biology (1MO84); Genetically Modified Foods (1GE75); Food & Beverage Production (1FO79); Genetic Engineering (1GE23); Agriculture, Food & Beverage (1AG53); Food Technology (1FO81); Pharmaceuticals & Biotechnology (1PH13); Agriculture, Food & Beverage Regulatory (1AG56); Agricultural Biotechnology (1AG65); Biopharmaceuticals (1BI13); Food Safety & Testing (1FO17); Biomedical Engineering (1BI75); Biotechnology (1BI78); Agriculture (1AG63))

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Section: NEWS01

GMO labeling bill faces new challenge

Thatcher Moats

VERMONT PRESS BUREAU

MONTPELIER - Vermont has passed progressive laws on the regulation of the Vermont Yankee nuclear plant, campaign contributions, and “data mining” by pharmaceutical companies that in recent years have been struck down by federal judges and the U.S. Supreme Court.

That spotty track record defending state laws in court is hindering an effort in the Legislature this year to pass a law requiring food products containing genetically modified organisms to be labeled as such. The GMO labeling law would again put Vermont at the legal forefront and could land the state in court.

”It’s just not a great environment to move forward with a bill that’s likely to get the state sued,” said Rep. Will Stevens, an Independent from Shoreham who sits on the House Agriculture Committee. “I think the public has a low appetite for it.”

Neither the federal government nor other states require the labeling. But efforts are under way in about 20 other states to pass GMO labeling mandates, as advocates argue genetically modified organisms carry health risks and consumers have a right to know whether the ingredients in their food have been genetically altered.

If legislators in Montpelier approve the bill, Vermont could be the first state in the nation to adopt the labeling law, giving the biotechnology industry in incentive to try to mount a legal challenge here.

Rep. Carolyn Partridge, who chairs the House Agriculture Committee, said she “would tend to doubt” the GMO bill will pass this year, but said it’s not out of the question.

”I think there’s a sense that we don’t want to put the state in a position of being the first and going it alone,” said Partridge.

Lawmakers on the committee believe a lawsuit is inevitable based on testimony they’ve heard from the state attorney general’s office and a lawmaker who works for the Legislature.

Michael O’Grady, an attorney with the Office of Legislative Council, told the House Agriculture Committee on Tuesday that he spoke to an attorney last week who represents biotechnology companies.

The lawyer based in Washington, D.C. said the state would be sued, O’Grady said, even if the Legislature delayed implementation of the law until other states passed labeling requirements.

The House Agriculture Committee has considered delaying the “conditional effective date” in the bill to avoid immediate litigation and create a “brotherhood in arms” with other states, said O’Grady.

”One of the things that was mentioned was the industry would likely not care if there was a conditional effective date and the industry would probably try and litigate as soon as possible,” O’Grady said, recounting the conversation with the attorney.

Gov. Peter Shumlin is also wary of legal action.

Shumlin said he helped pass a law in 1994 that required dairy products containing bovine growth hormone to be so labeled. The U.S. Second Circuit Court of Appeals struck down that law in 1996, arguing that it violated milk producers’ freedom of speech. The same issues would arise if the state required GMO labeling, Shumlin said.

”The relationship between that court decision and this decision is almost identical,” Shumlin said. “So I have real concerns that were we to pass a mandatory labeling law we would be back at the forefront arguing a case to the U.S. Supreme Court we already lost.”

Shumlin said, however, that he supports the bill and will let the Legislature “figure out what the best thing to do is.”

The GMO labeling bill has raised other concerns unrelated to the legal action, including a fear it could hurt small food businesses that can’t afford to comply with the mandates.

But Partridge remains committed to the concept of the bill, and said the committee will try to create legislation that would pass legal muster.

"I think people have a right to know what's in their food," said Partridge, a Democrat from Windham.

The losses in federal court have cost Vermont. In the case in which the U.S. Supreme Court overturned state's campaign finance laws in 2006, Vermont paid about \$1.5 million to the plaintiffs. In the prescription data case, Vermont has paid more than \$1.7 million to a pharmaceutical trade group and is expected to have to pay \$3.8 million to cover legal costs incurred by the data companies.

Entergy Corporation, the owner of Vermont Yankee, has asked a judge to force Vermont to pay the company \$4.6 million to cover legal bills that accrued during the case Entergy won in U.S. District Court in January, in which a judge struck down a law the state tried to use to shut down the plant.

The state has appealed the decision, and also has opposed Entergy's motion seeking legal fees, but the legal fee motion remains unresolved.

Pointing to these past cases, Rep. Jim McNeil, a Republican from Rutland Town opposed to the legislation, saying the potential cost of legal action is a reason not to pass the GMO bill.

"How much can little Vermont afford to pay?" he said.

Thatcher.moats@timesargus.com

---- Index References ----

Company: ENERGENCY CORP; MONTPELIER RE HOLDINGS LTD

News Subject: (Government Litigation (1GO18); Judicial Cases & Rulings (1JU36); Government (1GO80); Legislation (1LE97); Legal (1LE33))

Industry: (Transportation (1TR48); Freight Transportation Regulatory (1FR22); Freight Transportation (1FR88))

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Section: News

The great GMO debate

April 23, 2012

MONTPELIER -- Jeff Weinstein runs a small Montpelier company called Two Guys in Vermont that makes soups that are sold in stores.

Weinstein said he uses as many local, wholesome ingredients as he can find. He packages the soup in glass jars to steer clear of the chemicals in cans. He would love it if his soups could stand out on the supermarket shelf as not containing genetically engineered foods -- known as GMOs for genetically modified organisms

"For people who buy my soup, GE-free is important," Weinstein said.

Weinstein recently urged the House Agriculture Committee to pass a bill requiring foods that contain genetically engineered ingredients to be labeled as such. That means some of Weinstein's competitors' soup might come bearing a prominent label that reads: "This product may be partially produced with genetic engineering."

Legislators have heard a drumbeat of support for labeling. Some 300 people turned out for an April 12 public hearing at the Statehouse. More than 100 addressed the House Agriculture Committee, all speaking in favor of labeling genetically engineered foods.

"We have a right to uncontaminated agriculture in this state," Peggy Luhrs of Burlington told the committee at the hearing, echoing a common sentiment of uneasiness with the science of genetically engineered seeds. Many noted that 50 other nations require some sort of labeling.

"There is a desire to know what's in their food," Rep. Carolyn Partridge, D-Windham, chairwoman of the House Agriculture Committee.

Despite the clamor, labeling appears to be a long ways off in Vermont. Legislation that emerged from the House Agriculture Committee on Friday afternoon comes too late in the legislative session for there to be any hope of its making its way through the full House, the Senate and into law. In addition, the resistance that the legislation ran into highlights the chasm that can exist between the goals of a burgeoning political movement and the pressures legislators face as they seek to fashion laws.

The bill faces powerful opposition, and not only from the biotechnology industry that manufactures and defends its genetically engineered seeds. Some of the very people one might assume would be for the bill are also against it.

Gov. Peter Shumlin said he thinks consumers have a right to know what's in their food, but he fears a labeling law -- which would be the first in the nation -- would not withstand a constitutional challenge. The state's effort to require labeling of milk that contains bovine growth hormones was rejected in court in 1996, he noted.

"I'm gun shy because this is absolutely an identical bill," Shumlin said.

Some Vermont food producers -- even those producing health-conscious foods -- are also wary. They argue that if they can't prove they are GMO-free, they'd be stuck having to pay for separate labels for products in Vermont and elsewhere, or put themselves at a marketing disadvantage in other states.

"It hurts the very Vermont producer it's trying to help," said Jim Harrison, president of the Vermont Grocers Association. His group would want any labeling to be done on a national level, he said.

The legislation has opponents, too, who don't presume genetic engineering is dangerous at all. GMOs have been approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration as safe and the agency has rejected calls for national labeling.

"I feel comfortable with GMO products," said Rep. Norm McAllister, R-Highgate, a member of House Agriculture Committee and a dairy goat farmer who grows genetically modified corn. "We feed them to our animals and we eat those animals."

When the committee voted out the bill requiring labeling Friday, McAllister cast the lone vote against it.

Supporters of labeling also came away unsatisfied, as the bill included a sizable hurdle. Any implementation would be delayed until 365 days after California and at least two Northeastern states enact similar laws. The 9-1 vote was encouraging to labeling supporter Andrea Stander, executive director of Rural Vermont, but the delay in implementation was a big disappointment, she said.

”They passed a piece of legislation that has its arms and legs tied and eyes and ears covered,” Stander said. “There’s a real concern that if we don’t do something about this soon, there aren’t going to be any GMO-free foods.”

Why label?

On a table at a recent news conference, pro-labeling advocates laid out a variety of food products -- from potato chips to granola bars -- that declared themselves “natural.”

A consumer has no way of knowing whether those foods contain genetically engineered ingredients, said Stander, who was among those coordinating the display.

”Today, 80 percent of all packaged foods sold in this country are products of genetic engineering, yet it is extremely difficult for Vermonters to make informed choices about these products because they are not labeled, or are mislabeled as natural,” Rep. Kate Webb, D-Shelburne, lead sponsor of the labeling bill, told the House Agriculture Committee.

Genetic engineering of seeds is a method used to give agriculture products ranging from alfalfa to zucchini more resistance to pesticides, higher yield and higher nutritional content. It’s a science that the FDA and the biotechnology industry say is safe.

Brian O’Connor, manager of state relations with the Biotechnology Industry Organization, defended genetic engineering as “a safe and thoroughly regulated process” in testimony to the House Agriculture Committee, where he also spoke against the labeling bill. His organization represents biotechnology companies that manufacture genetically engineered seeds, including industry giant Monsanto.

Rep. Bill Johnson, R-Canaan, has watched the debate over labeling with wariness. He said as a farmer the technology allows him to use less herbicide while increasing his yield and creating no health problems for his cows.

Vermont legislators have also heard from plenty of people wary of the science and the FDA’s oversight. The FDA acknowledges that it relies on industry studies, said Dave Rogers, policy adviser with the Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont.

Rogers conceded that he has no smoking gun to prove that genetic engineering creates

environmental or health problems, but that many studies have raised questions in the 15 years that GMOs have been commonly used in the United States. “We really need a whole lot more science,” he said. “There’s a real uncertainty.”

In the bill that passed out of committee last week, legislators cited studies of laboratory animals with gastrointestinal, kidney and liver damage, reproductive problems and allergic reactions. They note that no long-term studies have been done in the United States on the safety to humans of genetically engineered foods.

Rep. Duncan Kilmartin, R-Newport, known for raising legal concerns about legislation the House considers, voted for the labeling bill. He’s leery of the science. “In the big picture, when you are genetically modifying a life form, you’re afraid of the Dolly the Sheep or the Boris Karloff syndrome,” he said.

Confusion

There’s also a fair amount of confusion over GMOs, including what foods are produced through genetic engineering.

Rep. Will Stevens, I-Shoreham, is an organic vegetable farmer who pores over seed catalogs as part of his livelihood. As a member of the House Agriculture Committee, he’s been listening to testimony on labeling, which he supports. He was surprised, however, to hear a witness speak of genetically engineered squash.

”That’s new to me,” he said.

Though it is far less common than genetically engineered corn and soy, it appears genetically engineered squash is in the market.

As legislators heard from supporters and opponents of labeling, some producers said it can be a challenge for them to find ingredients they know to be free of genetic engineering, which could create problems if they are forced to clarify that fact for labeling purposes.

Francie Caccavo, owner of Olivia’s Croutons in New Haven, said she wants to avoid genetically engineered ingredients. She uses organic soy, cornmeal and canola oil. However, she said, she was unable to earn verification that her products were GMO-free from the California-based Non-GMO Project because of butter she uses in some of her croutons. She can’t prove the butter came from cows that are GMO-free, she told the House Agriculture Committee.

The Vermont law would exempt dairy products, legislators told her, but it wouldn’t resolve the potential for different standards in different states.

Jerry Greenfield, co-founder of Ben & Jerry's who said he was not speaking for the company he no longer owns, told the committee he supports labeling. As he handed out samples of Cherry Garcia ice cream, however, he said he didn't know the genetic history of the cherries. (Cherries aren't on the list of foods commonly grown with genetic engineering.)

"Ben & Jerry's is not GMO-free," Greenfield conceded. "Maybe it's detrimental to companies like Ben & Jerry's to have to label. ... I say that's OK. Let the chips fall where they may."

Legal trouble

The House committee members said they heard clearly from Rachel Lattimore, a Washington lawyer specializing in biotechnology, that they would be facing a lawsuit if the legislation passed.

Shumlin said he was worried the state would lose that lawsuit. The Attorney General's Office agrees.

Ryan Kriger, an assistant state attorney general, warned that the GMO bill is very similar to the bovine growth hormone labeling law struck down in 1996.

Kruger said requiring labeling of genetically engineered products could face a challenge on several counts in court. An opponent could argue that states are pre-empted from regulating food products by the FDA, that states are restricted from controlling interstate commerce or that companies' right to free speech is protected by the First Amendment.

Kruger said courts would require the state to prove it had a valid interest in restricting the speech and that the solution is related to that interest. The court ruled in the milk case that a consumer's curiosity is not enough, he said.

If the state's interest is in ensuring food safety, it would run up against the FDA's declaration that genetically engineered foods are safe, Kruger said.

Supporters of labeling argue that since the 1996 decision, courts have viewed such cases differently. Alaska passed a law requiring the labeling of genetically engineered fish, the Center for Food Safety said in a memo to the House Agriculture Committee that argued a labeling law would be legally defensible.

The legal question mark loomed, though, as the committee considered the issue. "The legal challenges are huge," Stevens conceded.

Numerous speakers at the public hearing told the committee that a court fight would be worthwhile and they are willing to pay for it, accusing Shumlin of being afraid to stand up to

Monsanto. The Organics Consumer Association, a national group, even started a legal defense fund for Vermont or any other state that's sued.

Legislators know that not all Vermonters share the appetite for lawsuits. Conscious of the cost of defending recent drug marketing and Vermont Yankee laws that were shot down in court, lawmakers are wary of creating another.

"I appreciate the sentiment," said Partridge, the committee chairwoman, "but the reality is I'd like to create a bill that's really defensible in court."

Partridge said she thinks her committee has done that. The bill cites a need to protect Vermonters' health, environment, agricultural diversity and the food market from the increasing use of genetically engineered foods. She also argued that the bill cites legal precedent that allows a state to regulate foods. She noted that there is a push in California for a public vote on the issue this November and legislation brewing in more than a dozen other states.

"I think we put together a very good bill," Partridge said. "I think it could provide a model for other states that may be continuing to work on this."

Contact Terri Hallenbeck at 651-4887 or thallenbeck@burlingtonfreepress.com. Follow her on Twitter at www.twitter.com/terrivt.

BOX: What's at stake

THE BILL: The House Agriculture Committee voted 9-1 on Friday for a bill, H.722, that would require products containing genetically modified foods to be labeled as such, but delays implementation until a year after California and at least two Northeastern states pass similar laws.

LABELING ADVOCATES: Supporters in Vermont of labeling genetically engineered foods have formed a consortium: www.vtrighttoknow.org.

LABELING OPPONENTS: The Bio Technology Organization, a trade group representing biotechnology companies that include seed manufacturer Monsanto Corp., opposes labeling legislation: www.bio.org.

FDA: The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has rejected efforts to require labeling nationally and considers genetically engineered foods safe: www.fda.gov/food/labelingnutrition/default.htm.

NON-GMO PROJECT: The California-based group has a verification process for labeling products as free of genetically engineered ingredients, www.nongmoproject.org

The great GMO debate, 2012 WLNR 9517586

---- Index References ----

Company: GREAT EASTERN SHIPPING CO LTD (THE); MONSANTO CO; SPORT HALEY INC

News Subject: (Legislation (1LE97); Government (1GO80))

Industry: (Biopharmaceuticals (1BI13); Organic Foods (1OR43); Genetically Modified Foods (1GE75); Molecular & Cellular Biology (1MO84); Biomedical Engineering (1BI75); Agriculture, Food & Beverage Regulatory (1AG56); Specialty Foods (1SP29); Pharmaceuticals & Biotechnology (1PH13); Agriculture, Food & Beverage (1AG53); Agriculture (1AG63); Genetic Engineering (1GE23); Food Safety & Testing (1FO17); Food & Beverage Production (1FO79); Food Technology (1FO81); Biotechnology (1BI78); Agricultural Biotechnology (1AG65))

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March 4, 2013

Section: THISJUSTIN

Shumlin: GMO labeling good, bill bad

Gordon Dritschilo

Staff Writer

Gov. Peter Shumlin said Monday that a bill on labeling genetically modified foods could do its cause more harm than good.

The governor addressed a crowd of more than 100 in the South Station restaurant during the Rutland Region Chamber of Commerce's legislative breakfast.

Shumlin heard from Chamber of Commerce Executive Vice President Thomas Donahue against the bill on the grounds it would harm a number of local businesses, like Westminster Cracker, which uses genetically modified Canola Oil. Then a member of the audience countered that many people locally want to know what they are buying, as evidenced by the success of the farmers market.

Shumlin said he supports labeling, but that the bill resembled one dealing with a milk-production hormone that was passed during his time in the Legislature and signed by then-Gov. Howard Dean.

"The food industry took us to the Second Circuit," Shumlin said. "It was not only called unconstitutional for some very good reasons, but we had to pay the legal fees."

Shumlin said the "anti-labeling" forces would like him to sign the bill because they know they can defeat it in court and likely set back the labeling movement nationally.

Shumlin: GMO labeling good, bill bad, 2013 WLNR 5408965

Shumlin also told the crowd about his push for greater STEM education and his efforts to fund transportation improvements in the state.

The Governor described how, when he took office, employers would tell him they were looking at layoffs. Now, he says, they are telling him they have jobs to offer but cannot find trained Vermonters to fill them.

For the complete story, see Tuesday's Rutland Herald.

---- Index References ----

News Subject: (Abortion (1AB77); Legislation (1LE97); Social Issues (1SO05); U.S. Legislation (1US12); Government (1GO80))

Industry: (Food & Beverage Production (1FO79); Agricultural Biotechnology (1AG65); Agriculture (1AG63); Food Technology (1FO81); Genetically Modified Foods (1GE75); Agriculture, Food & Beverage Regulatory (1AG56); Restaurants & Food Service (1RE91); Food & Beverage Distribution & Services (1FO39); Food Safety & Testing (1FO17); Agriculture, Food & Beverage (1AG53); Retail (1RE82))

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With Vermont in front, GMO fight heats up, 2013 WLNR 14164173

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Section: Green Mountain

With Vermont in front, GMO fight heats up

June 9, 2013

FREE PRESS FILE

From Maine to Washington, a growing number of states are taking on the issue of genetically engineered foods, fanning the flames of a decades-old debate about whether these organisms — often called GMOs — are dangerous to human health.

Mark Collier/AP

Last month, the Vermont House of Representatives became the first legislative body in the nation to pass a bill requiring labeling of genetically modified organisms, followed weeks later by the Connecticut Senate. Right to Know GMO, which describes itself as a grassroots coalition with members in 37 states, counts 26 states as having introduced labeling bills. The Vermont bill goes to the Senate when it reconvenes in January.

”I think there is very good support in the Senate to move this forward,” said Rep. Kate Webb, D-Shelburne, lead sponsor of the House bill. “We have been the little state that could. We were the first to ban slavery, the first to pass civil unions. We can be first here.”

The national and international debate about labeling GMOs also has been heating up. Late last month, more than 400 cities around the world, including Montpelier, held a March Against Monsanto. Monsanto, based in St. Louis, is the highest profile manufacturer of genetically modified seeds in the world.

With Vermont in front, GMO fight heats up, 2013 WLNR 14164173

About 90 percent of the corn, cotton, soy beans and sugar beets grown in the United States are genetically engineered, according to the Biotechnology Industry Organization, the trade group representing Monsanto, Bayer, Dow, DuPont and other major firms that dominate the industry.

The GMO debate hinges on the question of whether the foods produced from engineered crops are harmful to human health, which has not been definitively answered by science. In the meantime, advocates of labeling say consumers at least have the right to know they're ingesting GMOs. Labeling opponents, including Monsanto, counter that labeling amounts to a kind of "scarlet letter" that will unfairly stigmatize whatever it touches.

Whole Foods Market isn't waiting for the health question to be resolved, announcing in March that by 2018, all products in its U.S. and Canadian stores must be labeled to indicate if they contain genetically modified organisms.

"We are putting a stake in the ground on GMO labeling to support the consumer's right to know," said Walter Robb, co-CEO of Whole Foods, in a statement.

In Washington state, a referendum on GMO labeling is scheduled for November. A similar referendum in California failed this past November, 53-47, after the biotech industry spent nearly \$45 million on opposition advertising.

At the federal level, Sen. Barbara Boxer, D-Calif., introduced a bill in April that would direct the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to "clearly label" genetically engineered foods. Boxer says she has 11 co-sponsors — 11 more than she had in 2000, when she first introduced labeling legislation. Rep. Peter DeFazio, D-Ore., introduced the House version of the bill.

Boxer also attached two amendments to the Farm Bill, one saying that the United States should join the 64 other nations, including those in the European Union, that have labeling requirements for genetically engineered foods.

The other amendment requires a report in six months from several federal agency heads reviewing the labeling methods used internationally, and the "probable impacts" of having differing labeling requirements passed by states rather than a federal standard.

"As more and more states take action, I believe lawmakers in Washington will realize that Congress and the FDA must ensure that all Americans know what's in the food they're eating," Boxer wrote in an email.

FDA doesn't see a problem

The FDA ruled in 1992 that genetically engineered foods made from seeds provided by

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Monsanto and others are not “materially different” from their traditional counterparts and therefore do not have to be labeled — a ruling opponents of GMOs find unconvincing.

”The companies have such complete control over who can do independent research into the nature of these things and their impact that we really don’t know very much,” said Andrea Stander, executive director of Rural Vermont, a nonprofit farm advocacy group. “We don’t know nearly as much as we should.”

Anticipating lawsuits from the biotech industry if states pass labeling laws, Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., introduced an amendment to the Farm Bill on May 22 that would guarantee states the right to require labeling on any food or beverage containing GMOs. The amendment also required the FDA and the U.S. Department of Agriculture to report to Congress within two years the percentage of food and drinks in the United States that contain genetically engineered ingredients.

Sanders’ amendment was rejected the next day, 71-27. Sanders’ senior colleague from Vermont, Democrat Patrick Leahy, voted in favor of the amendment.

”What I wanted to clarify is that states in this country have the right to label,” Sanders said in an interview with the Burlington Free Press. “When you deal with companies like Monsanto, the biotech industry and large food, you’re taking on very powerful special interests, and they will spend hundreds of millions of dollars to prevent labeling.”

Monsanto has clearly stated why it is opposed to labeling, saying mandatory labeling “could imply that food products containing these ingredients are somehow inferior to their conventional or organic counterparts.”

The modifications to the DNA of seeds, which started in the mid-1990s, fall into two categories: seeds that have built-in genetic resistance to insects, forgoing the need for insecticides, and seeds that tolerate herbicides, making it possible to spray crops, such as soy beans, that are prone to weeds.

”If you don’t have to put insecticide on a crop, it saves time and money, and it’s better for the environment,” Karen Batra, spokeswoman for BIO, said in an interview. “Herbicide-tolerant varieties allow no-till agriculture. You don’t have to go into the fields and till weeds, which saves fuel and time and keeps nitrogen in the soil.”

Batra said genetic engineering is the fastest-growing technology in the history of agriculture, with upward of 17 million farmers around the world using genetically altered seeds.

The problem with requiring labels on genetically engineered foods, Batra said, is that they would imply those foods are unsafe.

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”In the United States, food packaging labels are reserved to convey food safety information about allergens that might be in a food, or to convey nutritional composition,” she said. “If the federal government were to mandate by law that a particular food product needed to be labeled, that would infer it would be for a safety reason.”

As for state efforts to require labeling, Batra said supporters of the bills have one purpose in mind.

”What the proponents of those labels have said is they want it to be the equivalent of a skull and crossbones that would drive away customers and force food producers to stop using engineered ingredients,” Batra said.

The right to know

Rep. Kate Webb, lead sponsor of the bill passed by the Vermont House, denies the intent of the bill is to stigmatize GMOs.

”People are really just asking for the right to know,” Webb said. “We’re not saying you can’t grow or sell them. We want to make a choice. Some of the emerging health concerns are quite concerning.”

What exactly are those health concerns? No one seems to know.

Michael Hansen, senior scientist for Consumers Union, the advocacy arm of Consumer Reports, is opposed to GMOs, but he says the rigorous testing and long-term studies that would definitively answer the health question have not been done.

”There are two camps,” Hansen said. “Studies funded by industry don’t find problems. Studies that are more independent do find problems that need to be followed up.”

Complicating the picture, the United States has no laws governing the regulation of biotechnology and genetically engineered foods, said Colin O’Neil, director of government affairs for the Center for Food Safety, a national nonprofit advocacy group opposed to GMOs, with offices in Washington, D.C., San Francisco, and Portland, Ore.

”Instead we have a loose guidance that was issued in 1986 that told federal agencies to utilize existing authorities,” O’Neil said. “So that’s why the FDA, which has no expertise in agriculture, no expertise in fisheries and no expertise in environmental analysis, are the ones determining the safety of a genetically engineered fish.”

The fish in question is the first genetically engineered animal proposed for human consumption, an Atlantic salmon developed by AquaBounty Technologies of Waltham, Mass. The

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AquaBounty salmon use a gene from an eel to “flip a switch in the genetics so they grow year-round,” said Karen Batra, the spokeswoman for industry trade group BIO. Salmon whose DNA hasn’t been tinkered with grow only during part of the year.

”Genetically engineered salmon has been under review for 17 years,” Batra said. “How does that company stay in business?”

O’Neil said it has taken 17 years to review the AquaBounty salmon not because the FDA is conducting a robust study, but because there are no laws to guide the process.

”Consumers have zero confidence in federal government regulation and oversight of genetically engineered foods,” O’Neil said. “They know there’s a voluntary safety consultation and that we don’t have laws governing how genetically engineered foods should be regulated.”

Bills rely on trigger clauses

The Vermont labeling bill goes next to the Vermont Senate, which reconvenes in January.

Assuming the House and Senate agree on joint legislation, Gov. Peter Shumlin must sign the bill before it becomes law.

Susan Allen, Shumlin’s deputy chief of staff, wrote in an email that the governor believes Vermonters should know what’s in their food.

”The Governor appreciates the work the House did on its thoughtful GMO labeling bill, keeping Vermont front and center in this discussion, and looks forward to working with the Senate next year as this issue moves forward,” Allen wrote.

Weeks after the Vermont House acted, the Connecticut Senate passed a labeling law, 35-1. The Vermont and Connecticut bills both contain trigger clauses, requiring other states to act first.

In the Vermont version, the effective date of the law would be 18 months after two other states enact labeling legislation “substantially comparable” to the Vermont law, or July 1, 2015, whichever comes first.

In the Connecticut Senate bill, the effective date would be July 1, 2016, or after three states pass similar legislation. The Connecticut House version of the bill had an even more restrictive trigger clause, plus an exemption for farmers grossing less than \$1.5 million, and no definite implementation date. Supporters of labeling, such as the nonprofit GMO Free CT, denounced the bill.

The weakened House bill went back to the Connecticut Senate, where legislators and the

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Governor's Office worked out a compromise that dropped the exemption for small farmers and required four states — rather than the five envisioned in the original House bill — to enact labeling laws before the Connecticut law takes effect. One of those states must border Connecticut, and the aggregate population of states in the Northeast with labeling laws must exceed 20 million before Connecticut requires labeling.

Still, supporters see the compromise, which now goes back to the House for another vote, as a victory. Tara Cook-Littman, president of GMO Free CT, called the bill “historic” and said it would provide momentum for fellow activists throughout the nation.

”We urge lawmakers across the country to follow Connecticut’s lead and give their citizens the right to know,” Cook-Littman wrote in an email. “We just took on the most powerful industry on the globe and the power of the people triumphed.”

Lawsuits on the horizon

Vermont Attorney General Bill Sorrell said the reason behind the trigger clauses Vermont and Connecticut included is fear of lawsuits. No one wants to go first.

”When a state forces a company to speak with their labeling, it’s a compelled-speech issue,” Sorrell said. “They say, ‘You’re forcing us to go through the expense to speak and violating our Constitutional right to remain silent.’”

The idea is to let a few other states get sued first to work out the issues and pay the attorneys’ fees. If Vermont were to lose a case that attacked a GMO labeling law, the state would be on the hook for paying the others side’s attorneys’ fees, which Sorrell said could run into the millions of dollars.

Sorrell points to Vermont’s experience with requiring labeling for mercury and bovine growth hormone, or rBGH, in consumer products. The state was sued in both cases in federal court. Vermont won on mercury and lost on rBGH.

The difference, Sorrell said, is that the science on the harmful health effects of mercury is overwhelming, while the court found the evidence of harm from rBGH to public health to be “not sufficiently compelling.”

The question, Sorrell said, is: “Are GMOs more akin to rBGH or mercury?”

Sorrell said he told legislators that if Vermont is the first state to require labeling for genetically engineered foods, he would do his “level best” to defend the government-mandated speech that entails, but he included a caveat.

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”Just know going into this,” he said, “if you’re going to enact this legislation, there’s going to be a fight, and there’s no certainty we’re going to win.”

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Company: BIOTECHNOLOGY INDUSTRY ORGANIZATION; WHOLE FOODS MARKET INC; AQUABOUNTY TECHNOLOGIES INC; EI DU PONT DE NEMOURS AND CO; DOW CHEMICAL CO (THE); BAYER AG; MONTPELIER RE HOLDINGS LTD; MONSANTO CO

News Subject: (Legislation (1LE97); Government (1GO80))

Industry: (Agriculture, Food & Beverage Regulatory (1AG56); Agriculture (1AG63); Food Safety & Testing (1FO17); Biopharmaceuticals (1BI13); Pharmaceuticals & Biotechnology (1PH13); Molecular & Cellular Biology (1MO84); Food Technology (1FO81); Agriculture, Food & Beverage (1AG53); Agricultural Biotechnology (1AG65); Genetic Engineering (1GE23); Biomedical Engineering (1BI75); Biotechnology (1BI78); Genetically Modified Foods (1GE75))

Region: (District of Columbia (1DI60); U.S. New England Region (1NE37); Vermont (1VE77); California (1CA98); U.S. Mid-Atlantic Region (1MI18); USA (1US73); U.S. West Region (1WE46); Connecticut (1CO13); Americas (1AM92); Maine (1MA44); North America (1NO39))

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NewsRoom

Tavis Smiley Show, May 7, 2014

<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/tavissmiley/interviews/peter-shumlin/#>

[copied into plain text from web version; minor formatting for readability]

VERMONT'S GOV. PETER SHUMLIN

Gov. Shumlin explains why he's signing legislation that makes his state the first in the U.S. to require labeling of all genetically modified food.

Peter Shumlin was first elected governor of Vermont in 2010 and is now in his second term. A native of the state, he began his public service career at age 24, when he was elected to the Putney select board and served in the state House of Representatives and in the state Senate, leading that body as president pro tem for the majority of his eight terms. He's a committed entrepreneur and was the longtime co-director of an educational company that sends students on service projects across the globe. He also helped found Landmark College, which was created to help people with learning disabilities gain a college education, and is chair of the Democratic Governors Association.

TRANSCRIPT

Tavis: Tomorrow, Vermont will become the first state in the union to require that food manufacturers label products that contain GMOs – genetically modified organisms.

There are currently 29 other states that have introduced similar bills, which the food and biotech industries, as you might imagine, are fighting hard to prevent from coming law.

Joining us now from our PBS affiliate in Colchester, Vermont is the governor of that state, Peter Shumlin, who will sign the groundbreaking Bill tomorrow. Governor Shumlin, with a busy schedule tomorrow, I'm delighted to have you on this program tonight. Thank you for your time, sir.

Gov. Peter Shumlin: Hey, it's great to be with you. Thanks for having me on.

Tavis: So let me start by asking why you intend to do this tomorrow when you know that the very next day, I suspect, you're going to be sued by more than one person?

Shumlin: You know, that wouldn't surprise me, but I got to tell you, I just feel strongly that Vermonters deserve to know what's in their food. As you know, the Western European countries are way ahead of us on this.

But this isn't a judgment on whether GMOs are good or bad. All we're saying in Vermont is consumers have the right to know what they buy. When you go shopping, you can look at the ingredients, see what you're eating.

It just seems like it should be a basic right that Vermonters, and I think people across America, should be able to know whether or not they're consuming GMO food.

People feel differently about it, strong feelings on both sides. My view is pro-choice – let consumers know.

Tavis: Seems pretty basic, pretty simple to me, Governor; you go buy something; you want to know what's in the food you buy. I get that. If it were really just that simple, I suspect that the food industry might not be pushing back on you so hard.

Again, it wasn't such a bold prediction. Everybody in the country who's following this expects that you are going to be sued. So it's got to be obviously more, it's about more than just giving consumers what they have a right to know as viewed by the industry. What's their beef, pardon the pun?

Shumlin: Well the bottom line is, do you not do the right thing because someone's going to sue you? Yes, I'm not going to fall off my tractor up here if I find out that we get sued by the food manufacturers. But we're going to set up a fund, as the bill does, to try and fight back.

We're going to be launching at the bill signing the Vermont Food Fight fund. We invite people to come to Shumlin.gov, check out our website, and help us out. But bottom line is one of the problems with this issue is that consumers have been denied their rights, their right to know what's in their food, because other legislators have feared getting sued.

I finally said really? Is that the way democracy's supposed to work, that companies with a lot of money threaten to sue legislators and governors who sign bills like this, and therefore, progress doesn't happen.

So I really feel strongly that Vermont is being bold by saying listen, if you're going to sue us, that's not going to dissuade us from doing the right thing. We believe we will prevail in court. We have a good shot at prevailing in court.

But Vermonters deserve to know what's in their food. We're going to give them that right. If we get sued, we'll raise the money and fight back.

Tavis: What is it that you believe and Vermonters believe – and again, there are 29 other states that have similar bills. So what is it that the proponents of these kinds of laws believe they are not being told by the industry?

Shumlin: Well I think the fear really is that we're entering in to the territory of the unknown, and the notion that – and I'm a kid that was born and raised in Vermont. We're very close to the land.

We grow a lot of our own food; we're one of the leaders in the nation in terms of our small farmers making the best cheese, the best maple syrup, the best products.

There's a real fear that we just don't know what it means when you take something that nature has created over the years and cross it with some genetically modified organism that gives it powers and processes that we didn't know about before, and frankly that might not be good for your health.

So we're not saying yes or no to the health question. As you know there are studies that many people pass around that say that this stuff is safe and you're all set if you eat it.

If you believe that, go ahead. There are those who feel very strongly that they don't want to be a part of that experiment, and we just feel they ought to be able to pick up the item at the grocery store, take a look, as we do for other ingredients in the food that we buy, and say yeah, I don't want to eat GMO foods, so I won't; or I do. At least you know.

Tavis: If you're not taking the position, Governor, as you said earlier, if you're not taking a position about whether or not GMOs are good or bad, your point is that the Vermonters and for that matter other Americans have a right to know what they're buying.

So if you're not taking a position on whether it's good or bad, why not give the industry the benefit of the doubt?

Shumlin: Because there are many, many people who believe that it is not wise to be tampering with what nature has created. I'm not going to enter into that debate, who's right or wrong there.

All I can say is I've had so many Vermonters come up to me from all walks of life, Republicans, Democrats, Independents, progressives, it doesn't matter who. When they say, "Listen, what we want is to be able to know what we're buying in a grocery store."

It just seems like that's a fair and reasonable request. I would urge the food industry, the big food manufacturers in America, to do this voluntarily, but we've asked them to do that.

They won't, they don't, so I think that by Vermont saying listen, we're going to pass this bill, we're going to sign it. Vermonters are going to know what's in their food, first of all, I think other states will join us.

Secondly, I think it will eventually push the industry to say let's join the Europeans. The entire EU now has labeling for GMOs, and is simply saying let's let consumers know what they're buying, let's let them choose.

I think it's a huge mistake by the food manufacturers of America not to be saying let's let consumers know what – we know the public wants this. Let's let them know, let them decide.

Tavis: I'm not asking this question out of any naïveté, but what reasons have you been given by the industry, Governor, for why they will not, have not as yet, done this voluntarily.

Shumlin: I really don't know the answer to that. I can only speculate that they fear that it will – their concern, I believe, is that when you label, it's passing a judgment. I don't believe that to be the case.

But they would argue that you're suggesting that one food is not as good or as wholesome as another food. Now we know that there's people that believe that, and they should have the right to know.

There's an awful lot of Americans who probably don't believe that. So my point's a simple one as a governor of a state where I'm getting overwhelming consensus from constituents.

Vermont's different than other states in the respect that as a governor, we're so small – we have 625,000 people up here – I see Vermonters every single day, talk to them.

It's unusual if a Vermonter doesn't meet me at some point in the year. Just so many of them come up to me on the street, saying, "Please, I want to know what's in my food, will you sign that bill? Let us have that right."

I think the food manufacturers are making a big mistake here. Vermont's led in the past. We were the first state to abolish slavery; we were the first state to pass marriage equality, just because it was the right thing to do, not because judges were telling us to do it.

We've got some of the best small farmers, best ag products being shipped all over the world. We've created 11,000 jobs, new jobs, since I've been governor the last – almost 11,000 in the last three and a half years, and 2,200 of them are in the farming and food processing businesses.

Small farmers, small entrepreneurs, they're selling great food all over the place. They really want people to know that when you eat Vermont food, it's good, it's not tampered with, and it's the best food you can buy.

I think it backs up that whole part of our jobs sector by simply saying consumers in Vermont will know what they're eating.

Tavis: What is your sense of why, again, it's states and cities that have to lead the way on an issue of this importance to our health. Why do states have to lead and not the federal government?

Shumlin: Well let's be – I do think it boils down to an issue that we're all familiar with. First of all, Washington is paralyzed by a bunch of extremists in Congress who don't want to do anything on anything.

The second piece is that the big food manufacturers make big campaign contributions to folks down in Washington.

So I do believe that real change on all kinds of issues, including the right to know what you're eating when you go to the grocery store, that kind of change is going to come from the smaller states. Then as we gain momentum and as the ball rolls, just as we saw with marriage equality and many other things, the other states will come aboard.

But I really do believe that the basic principle that Americans have the right to know what they're buying when they buy it is going to be something that spreads across this country very quickly, and that the food manufacturers would be wise to be leaders instead of trying to block this with lawsuits and other ways of trying to get their way. I just think they're making a bad judgment here. They ought to come aboard, embrace this, label, solve the problem.

Tavis: If it turns out that the flip side of the end result of your well-intentioned law to let citizens know what they're buying is that you end up bankrupting one, two, three industries within the larger food industry, how would you feel about that?

Shumlin: I just don't think there's a scenario under which that will happen. Listen, consumers are not saying they will not buy GMO foods. What they're saying is "I want to know. I want to know."

Just as is happened in Western Europe – let's not forget, the entire EU has adopted this policy – they haven't seen their food manufacturers go out of business. They've seen consumers be much happier because they know what they're buying, and they've seen a continued increase in sales or it certainly didn't hurt their sales.

So there's no evidence to suggest that this is going to put anyone out of business. What it does do is give consumers the right to know. It's a matter of choice.

Tavis: For all those Vermonters watching tonight, I'd be remiss if I didn't ask you this question. I suspect you ain't going to make no news tonight, but I've got to do my job and ask this.

You have not announced as yet, Governor Shumlin, whether or not you're going to stand for reelection. You want to tell me something tonight, sir, on national television?

Shumlin: Well all I can tell you is that I am the governor of the best state in the country to be governor of, because you can get things like I'm just talking about done. We do things here that you just can't get done in so many other states across the country.

So we've got – we've done a lot of great things, we've got a lot more work to do, and I will give you this: I would like to have the privilege of continuing to do it.

Tavis: All right, Vermonters, I think the governor just kind of said something. (Laughter) We'll parse that in the Vermont media for the next 48 hours.

In any event, Governor, there are a lot of people tonight who are thanking you and Vermonters for taking the lead on this issue. I'm delighted to have had you on this program, and all the best to you, sir.

Shumlin: Thanks for having me on, and keep up the great work.

"Announcer:" For more information on today's show, visit Tavis Smiley at PBS.org.

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