

heard in the next selection of a lifetime appointment to the Court.

#### RECESS

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate stand in recess, as under the previous order.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 12:18 p.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. PORTMAN).

#### CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is now closed.

#### NATIONAL SEA GRANT COLLEGE PROGRAM AMENDMENTS ACT OF 2015

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the House message to accompany S. 764, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

House message to accompany S. 764, a bill to reauthorize and amend the National Sea Grant College Program Act, and for other purposes.

Pending:

McConnell motion to concur in the House amendment to the bill with McConnell (for Roberts) amendment No. 3450 (to the House amendment to the bill), in the nature of a substitute.

McConnell motion to refer the bill to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, I suspect a quorum call has been initiated. If so, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate is not in a quorum call.

The Senator from Kansas.

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, today is National Agriculture Day, and I wish to thank the farmers and ranchers of America. The Senate is considering legislation on an issue that is critically important to our Nation's food supply. It affects everyone from our producers in the fields to our consumers in the aisles of grocery stores. Without Senate action, this country will be hit with a wrecking ball—an apt description—that will disrupt the entire food chain. We need to act now to pass my amendment to S. 764. This is a compromised approach that provides a permanent solution to the patchwork of biotechnology labeling laws that will soon be wreaking havoc on the flow of interstate commerce, agriculture, and food products in our Nation's marketplace, and that is exactly what this is about. Let me repeat that. This is about the marketplace. It is not about safety. It is not about health or nutrition. It is about marketing. Science has proven again and again and again

that the use of agriculture biotechnology is 100 percent safe.

In fact, last year the Agriculture Committee heard from three Federal agencies tasked with regulating agriculture biotechnology: the Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, the Environmental Protection Agency—yes, the EPA—and the Food and Drug Administration, the FDA. Their work is based on sound science and is the gold standard for policymaking, including this policy we are debating today—one of the most important food and agriculture decisions in recent decades.

At our hearing, the Federal Government expert witnesses highlighted the steps their agencies have already taken to ensure that agriculture biotechnology is safe—safe to other plants, safe to the environment, and safe to our food supply. It was clear our regulatory system ensures biotechnology crops are among the most tested in the history of agriculture in any country. At the conclusion of the hearing, virtually all Senate Agriculture Committee members were in agreement. What happened? When did sound science go out the window? Since that hearing, the U.S. Government reinforced their decisions on the safety of these products.

In November, the FDA took several steps based on sound science regarding food produced from biotech plants, including issuing final guidance for manufacturers that wish to voluntarily label their products as containing ingredients from biotech or exclusively nonbiotech plants.

More important, the Food and Drug Administration denied a petition that would have required the mandatory labeling of biotech foods. The FDA stated that the petitioner failed to provide the evidence needed for the agency to put such a requirement in place because there is no health safety or nutritional difference between biotech crops and their nonbiotech varieties, regardless of some of the rhetoric we have heard on the floor of the Senate.

Thus, it is clear that what we are facing today is not a safety or health issue, despite claims by my colleagues on the Senate floor; it is a market issue. This is about a conversation about a few States dictating to every other State the way food moves from farmers to consumers in the value chain. We have a responsibility to ensure that the national market can work for everyone, including farmers, manufacturers, retailers, and, yes, consumers.

This patchwork approach of mandates adds costs to national food prices. In fact, requiring changes in the production or labeling of most of the Nation's food supply for a single State would impact citizens in our home States. A recent study estimates that the cost to consumers could total as much as—get this—\$82 billion annually, which comes to approximately \$1,050 per hard-working American fam-

ily. This Vermont law, which is supposed to go into effect in July, will cost each hard-working family \$1,050. Let me repeat that. If we fail to act, the cost to consumers could total as much as \$82 billion annually and will cost each hard-working American family just over \$1,000. Now is not the time for Congress to make food more expensive for anybody—not the consumer or the farmer.

Today's farmers are being asked to produce more safe and affordable food to meet the growing demands at home and around a troubled and very hungry world. At the same time, they are facing increased challenges to production, including limited land and water resources, uncertain weather patterns, and pest and disease issues. Agriculture biotechnology has become a valuable tool in ensuring the success of the American farmer and meeting the challenge of increasing their yields in a more efficient, safe, and responsible manner. Any threat to the technology hurts the entire value chain—from the farmer to the consumer and all those who are involved.

I also hear—and I do understand the concern from some of my colleagues about consumers and available information about our food. Some consumers want to know more about ingredients. This is a good thing. Consumers should take an interest in their food, where it comes from, and the farmers and ranchers who also produce their food. I can assure you the most effective tool consumers have to influence our food system or to know more about food is by voting with their pocketbooks in the grocery stores and supermarkets. This legislation puts forward policies that will help all consumers not only find information but also demand consistent information from food manufacturers. However, it is important, as with any Federal legislation on this topic, for Congress to consider scientific fact and unintended consequences.

The committee-passed bill created a voluntary national standard for biotechnology labeling claims of food. I have heard concerns that a voluntary-only standard would not provide consumers with enough information, even though there is no health, safety, or nutritional concern with this biotechnology. So we worked out a compromise to address these concerns by providing an incentive for the marketplace to provide more information.

This legislation will allow the markets to work. However, if they do not live up to their commitments and information is not made available to consumers, then this legislation holds the market accountable. Under this proposal, a mandatory labeling program would go into effect only if a voluntary program does not provide significant information after several years. The marketplace would then have adequate time to adjust and utilize a variety of options—a menu of options—to disclose information about ingredients, along

with a wealth of other information about the food on the shelves.

Simply put, the legislation before us provides an immediate comprehensive solution to the unworkable State-by-State patchwork of labeling laws. Preemption doesn't extend to State consumer protection laws or anything beyond the wrecking ball that we see related to biotechnology labeling mandates, and we do ensure that the solution to the State patchwork, the one thing we all agree upon, is effective. It sets national uniformity that allows for the free flow of interstate commerce, a power granted to Congress in the U.S. Constitution. This labeling uniformity is based on science and allows the value chain from farmer to processor, to shipper, to retailer, to consumer to continue as the free market intended. This ensures uniformity in claims made by manufacturers and will enhance clarity for our consumers.

Increasingly, many Americans have taken an interest in where their food comes from and how it is made. Let's keep in mind this is a good thing. We want consumers informed about food and farming practices, but at the same time we must also not demonize food with unnecessary labels.

This debate is about more than catchy slogans and made-up names for bills. It is about the role of the Federal Government to ensure the free flow of commerce, to make decisions based upon sound science, all the while providing opportunity for the market to meet the demands of consumers.

This is not the first time this body has addressed this issue. In 2012 and 2013, Members of the Senate soundly rejected the idea of mandatory labeling for biotechnology. That is right. Both times more than 70 Members voted to reject mandatory labeling. This body then stood up for sound science and common sense, and I trust my colleagues will continue to stand up and defend sound science again.

Time is of the essence for not only agriculture in the food value chain but also consumers who work together, face the wrecking ball of this patchwork of State-by-State mandates. This legislation has the support of more than 650 organizations. We never had 650 organizations contact the Agriculture Committee about any other bill, any other piece of legislation—more than 650. My staff now tells me that number is over 700, large and small, representing the entire food chain, and that number continues to grow every day. That is quite a coalition. They are here in Washington trying to say: Look, this is not going to work with regard to State-by-State regulation.

As I have said, never before in the Agriculture Committee have we seen such a coalition of constituents all united behind such effort. Their message is clear: It is time for us to act. It is time for us to provide certainty in the marketplace.

I appreciate the bipartisan support of those on the committee who joined me

to vote out our committee bill. The vote was 14 to 6. We made significant changes to address the concerns of others. Now we must carry this across the finish line. I urge my colleagues to support this compromising approach and protect the safest, most abundant, and affordable food supply in the world.

I yield the floor.

Upon close inspection, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I rise to speak about a very important issue for the American people—what they feed their families. Here is a photo of a dad—a pretty typical photo of a dad taking his two kids shopping. You can see he has one toddler there and he has one infant in the cart. How well I remember doing this with my own kids and then watching my kids with their kids. It is kind of a tradition.

So we have a couple of questions we have to ask ourselves when we look at a photo like this. If this dad wants to know what ingredients are in the food that he gives his kids, he should have a right to know that. That is my deep belief. He has a right to know that, just as they do in so many countries all over the world.

The bill that is going to come before us, called the Safe and Accurate Food Labeling Act, is anything but that. I would call it the “no label” act. It is a “no label.” There is no label required. It is a totally voluntary system. It is a “no label” label. Even if in 3 years Senator ROBERTS' mandatory labeling kicked in, you still would not have a true label. I think it is an embarrassment. I think it is an insult to consumers, and it is a sham. The goal of the bill—and I hope we vote it down—is to hide the information from consumers. It is going to make it harder, not easier, for consumers to know if they are feeding their families genetically modified organisms, or GMOs.

So here again is our typical dad, and he has his kids in the cart. They are shopping, they have had their outing, and he picks up a product. He wants to see the ingredients, including whether it has been genetically modified. Guess what. There is no GMO label.

So what are his options? Well, in 3 years, maybe he will have an option. But before then, the voluntary program is going to make it literally impossible for him to know what is in his food. It is either going to be a QR code—so he will have to have a smartphone, and even when he puts the smartphone up against the code, they don't really have to tell you easily whether it is GMO, and it is going to have a whole bunch of other information—or he is going to have to call a 1-800 number.

Can you believe this? The man is going through the grocery store. He has 50 products in his cart. He is saying: Wait a minute, kids—just a minute. Here, have some chips. Then he calls 1-800 and he tries to find out, and he gets probably some person answering him in India, which is usually what you get, and you go around the mulberry bush. How embarrassing is this?

Now, if he is lucky, he gets some products from companies that really are being fair about this, such as Campbell Soup Company. They are doing a really smart, voluntary label. It says: “Partially produced with genetic engineering. For information visit . . .” and they have a site. Campbell's, if he is lucky, has enough products in here that have a label. He may find out more information, but it is totally voluntary. It is totally voluntary. I want to say thank you to Campbell's for being upfront and putting the information right on the label.

As a mom and as a grandma, I want to know what is in my food. Because of work we have done before, you do have to list how much sugar is in the product, which is so critical as we combat diabetes and other things. Sometimes you read that sugar content, and you think: Oh my God, I am going to get something else. And you can see how many carbs, how much fat. Why can't you find out if the product is genetically modified? Seems to me, this is fair.

So while I call the Roberts proposal the “no-label label,” because it makes believe you are going to have a label, but there is no label—the groups, the consumer groups call it the DARK Act, because the label is voluntary. There is not going to be a label, at least for 3 years after that, if not longer. They will figure out another way to put it off indefinitely. Even if, after 3 years USDA decides they have to make something mandatory, information will be hidden behind Web sites or phone numbers or these QR codes that are so problematic.

So this busy dad that we have here, he is going to have to stop shopping for every item on his list. He would have to pull out his phone to make a call or go to a Web site or scan a code. You don't have to live too long to know this is not going to happen. This dad is not going to do that because he has two kids. By now they are screaming: Get me out of here; I am hungry, and where is mommy? So as to all of this notion that this dad is now going to deal with all of this—I don't care how much of a super dad you are, you are not going to make 50 phone calls to 1-800 numbers. You are not going to go look at 50 QR codes and find out whether the product has GMO. You are just not going to do it. It is not going to happen. The kids are going to be melting down. Even if he doesn't have kids with him, he has other things to do, by the way, like live his life outside the supermarket. He is going to want to get back home

or get back to work. It makes no sense at all.

By the way, this dad—and I ask Senator REID to take a look at this picture, if it doesn't remind him of one of his kids taking his grandkids shopping—is going to be expected—if he has 50 products and he wants to find out—either to have a smartphone and to put it up against the code and then find a whole bunch of information—

Mr. REID. Or call the 1-800 number.

Mrs. BOXER. Or he could call the 1-800 number, and we know what happens then. He will be transferred around the world.

So Americans should not have to run through hoops. Life is difficult enough already not to have to do that. This thing is a sham. It is an insult. It is a joke.

Why are they doing it on the other side of the aisle? Because they are beholden to the special interests that don't want to label GMOs, that are afraid if people know the food is genetically modified, they won't buy it, even though there is no proof of that at all.

Mr. President, 64 countries require labels. Some 64 countries today require simple labels, and many of our products are sold in those 64 countries. Let me tell you some of these countries.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD a list of the 64 countries that require GMO labeling.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

#### COUNTRIES WITH GMO LABELS

1. Australia, 2. Austria, 3. Belarus, 4. Belgium, 5. Bolivia, 6. Bosnia and Herzegovina, 7. Brazil, 8. Bulgaria, 9. Cameroon, 10. China, 11. Croatia, 12. Cyprus, 13. Czech Republic, 14. Denmark, 15. Ecuador, 16. El Salvador, 17. Estonia, 18. Ethiopia, 19. Finland, 20. France, 21. Germany, 22. Greece, 23. Hungary, 24. Iceland, 25. India, 26. Indonesia, 27. Ireland, 28. Italy, 29. Japan, 30. Jordan, 31. Kazakhstan, 32. Kenya, 33. Latvia, 34. Lithuania, 35. Luxembourg, 36. Malaysia, 37. Mali, 38. Malta, 39. Mauritius, 40. Netherlands, 41. New Zealand, 42. Norway, 43. Peru, 44. Poland, 45. Portugal, 46. Romania, 47. Russia, 48. Saudi Arabia, 49. Senegal, 50. Slovakia, 51. Slovenia, 52. South Africa, 53. South Korea, 54. Spain, 55. Sri Lanka, 56. Sweden, 57. Switzerland, 58. Taiwan, 59. Thailand, 60. Tunisia, 61. Turkey, 62. Ukraine, 63. United Kingdom, and 64. Vietnam.

Mrs. BOXER. I am going to name some of these countries that require the labels. So in other words, our companies have to put the label on if they want to sell there, letting people know if their food is genetically modified: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bolivia, Brazil, Bulgaria, China, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, El Salvador, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, India, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Latvia, Mali, Malta, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Slovakia, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Taiwan,

Thailand, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom, and Vietnam. I left some out, but they will be in the RECORD if anyone wants to see them.

Why is it that consumers in Russia have more information than our consumers do—the greatest country in the world? This makes no sense at all. Why is it that our companies are up in arms, since they have to put the label on in these other countries? They could put the label on here.

Now, if we care at all about what the public thinks, we should vote no on the Roberts bill. Some 90 percent of Americans want to know if the food they buy has been genetically engineered—90 percent. That is a majority of Republicans. That is a majority of Democrats. That is a majority of Independents. I think the other 10 percent are working for the big food companies, which don't seem to want to share this. Millions of Americans have filed comments with the FDA urging the agency to label genetically engineered food so they can have this information at their fingertips.

The bill also preempts any State in the Union from doing a label. Now, I don't like the notion of every State doing a label. That is why I support my bill—which has about 14 sponsors and simply says to the FDA to write a label and make this the law—or the Merkley bill, which comes up with four labels. Senator MERKLEY will talk about this. We say that would, in fact, be enough so that States wouldn't be able to act.

Meanwhile, this says no State action, and we are going to keep the status quo for at least 3 years—no labeling. Even after those 3 years, there may be no labeling at all. It is going to be barcodes, which are confusing, and 1-800 numbers, which probably take you to India to try and figure your way through it all.

Now, I have long believed in the power to give consumers information. I think you are all familiar with the dolphin-safe tuna labeling law. I am proud to say that I wrote that law. That law has been in effect since the 1990s, and people like it. But guess what. They see a smiling dolphin on the tuna can, and they know that tuna was caught in a way that does not harm the dolphins. We found out so many years ago that the tuna schools swim under the dolphins, and the tuna companies were purse seining on dolphins. They were putting nets over the dolphins, pulling them away and then catching the tuna, and the dolphins would die by the tens of thousands. So the schoolkids in those years said—at that time I was a House Member: Congresswoman BOXER, we don't want to have tuna that resulted in the death of all these dolphins. So we created the label, and the tuna companies were very helpful, just like Campbell Soup Company has been very helpful in labeling their products. When you have the companies come forward, it is very helpful. So we passed the bill. Everybody said: Oh, this is going to be terrible; no one will

buy tuna. Actually, people started buying the tuna because they changed the way they fish for the tuna. The dolphins weren't harmed. We have saved literally hundreds of thousands of dolphins over the period of time that label has been in effect.

Now, as to this label, all we are saying is to let us know. Let us know. What we do know is that many of these genetically engineered products, as they are growing in the ground, require huge amounts of pesticides. Senator HEINRICH talked about that. That is one issue which has grown in importance to parents because they don't want to give their kids food that is covered in pesticides if they have an option.

So the power we give the consumers is critical—the power to simply know the truth. And, to me, knowledge is power. To me, it is respect. You tell people the truth; you don't give them a sham bill and say: Well, we won't require anything for 3 years, but then we may have a barcode, and then we may have a 1-800 number. No. It is pretty simple: Require a label. Require a label. A label is simple. A label works.

I see Senator MERKLEY on the floor, and I am finishing up. We have various ways we can do the label. One way is to give it to the FDA and tell them to come up with it, and another way is the way Senator MERKLEY has proceeded in a way to attract more support. He has given four options, all of which are very good and all of which would immediately give consumers the information they need.

In 2000, when I introduced the first Senate bill concerning the labeling of GE foods, my legislation had one supporter, and it was me. I had no other supporters back then. It was so long ago. It was in 2000. Now 14 Senators are cosponsoring the bill. I am so proud to cosponsor Senator MERKLEY's bill, the Biotechnology Food Labeling and Uniformity Act, which, again, will put forward four options for companies.

There are reasons people want this information, and not one of us here should decry what our people want, even if they want to know if the foods contain GMOs because of the prevalence of herbicide-resistant crops. We know from the USGS that growers sprayed 280 million pounds of Roundup in 2012—a pound of herbicide for every person in the country. That is what they spray on these foods that contain GMOs. Whatever the reason, Americans deserve to know what is in the food they are eating. Some want to know it just to have the information.

Some in the food and chemical industry say that adding this very small piece of information would confuse or alarm consumers. This is an old and familiar argument raised by virtually every industry when they want to avoid giving consumers basic facts. In fact, a 2014 study from the Journal of Food Policy shows there is little evidence that mandatory labeling of GE foods signals consumers to avoid the product. There is no proof of that.

The FDA requires the labeling of more than 3,000 ingredients, additives, and processes. Orange juice from concentrate must be labeled. Consumers should be able to choose the product they prefer. If they like it from concentrate, fine. If they prefer it in a different fashion, fine. There is no reason they can't also have the knowledge that the food they are buying is genetically engineered.

The world certainly has moved ahead of us. The Roberts bill would take us way back into the dark, and that is why consumer groups call it the DARK Act. It is a sham. It is an embarrassment. It is time for us to shelve the DARK Act, to listen to 90 percent of the American people. For God's sake, if we do nothing else, we ought to listen to 90 percent of the American people, and we ought to pass a real bill to help Americans make informed choices about the foods they eat.

Again, I wish to thank Senator MERKLEY for really delving into this issue and coming up with another alternative that will be very acceptable not only to me but to, I believe, the 90 percent of the people who are crying out for this information.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, this debate on the Monsanto DARK Act, which stands for Denying Americans the Right to Know, centers around two basic propositions. The first proposition is that it would be chaotic to have 50 States with 50 different labeling standards. How could a food company possibly always get the right label to the right store if there are 50 different State standards? This is not a problem we actually have yet because we have no States that have adopted a standard for GE labeling. We have one State—I should say no States have implemented it. One State has adopted a standard, and that won't be implemented until July. So we are far away from having any issue over conflicting standards. But I acknowledge the basic point. This makes sense. It makes sense that we don't want to have a world in which every State has a different approach: In this State you do X, Y, and Z, and in this State you do A, B, and C, and what the exemptions are differ, and the formats differ, and so on and so forth. So let's just concede that at this point, it makes sense to have a single standard for the country. But a single standard about what?

That brings us to the second basic proposition, which is that there be a consumer-friendly alert that there are GE ingredients in a product. That is all. If a State says they want to have a simple, consumer-friendly alert that there are GE ingredients, then they should be able to do that.

If we don't want 50 standards, then we need to have the replacement be a national standard that provides the same thing, that is a consumer-friendly alert that there are GE ingredients.

Then the individual can do more investigation. They can go to the company's Web site and find out the details, including what type of genetic engineering it is, what is its impact, and so on and so forth.

Right now there is a coalition of individuals in this Chamber who don't believe in Americans' right to know. They want to take it away. They want to support a bill, which is currently on the floor right now, that denies Americans the right to know because they are getting pressure from Monsanto and friends, and they are not willing to stand up for the American citizen, their constituents. They don't believe in a "we the people" America; they believe in "we the titans," that we are here simply on the end of a puppet string. But we are not here for that purpose. That is not the vision of our Constitution. The vision of our Constitution is that we are an "of the people, for the people, and by the people" world. That is what makes America beautiful, not that a few powerful groups can control what happens here in this Chamber, this honored and revered Chamber where it is our responsibility to hold up our "we the people" vision of the Constitution.

So this bill, this Monsanto Deny Americans the Right to Know Act 2.0, has a few shams and scams placed in it to pretend that it is a labeling law.

The first scam that it has in it—our sham—is an 800 number. I as a consumer can go to a grocery shelf and in 5 seconds I can check three products for an ingredient by looking at the label; 1 second, 2 seconds, 3 seconds—well, less than 5 seconds. In 3 seconds I can check and see whatever I want to find out. If I want to check the calorie count or check for vitamin A or what percentage of the daily recommended amount is in the food or if I want to see if it contains peanuts because I am allergic to peanuts, I can do it for three products in 3 seconds. That is consumer-friendly. That is why we put it on the label. That is why we say: Oh gosh, we are going to give people the information they want so they can exercise their freedom when they buy things to support what they want. That is integrity between the producer and the consumer.

But do we know what the opposite of integrity is? That is the DARK Act. Deny Americans the right to know and ban States from providing this basic information. It is the complete absence of responsibility to the citizen.

Well, there is a 1-800 number. How would that work? First of all, I have to find the 800 number. Then I have to make sure I have a phone with me. Then I have to make sure I have good cell phone coverage. Then I have to go to a phone tree. You know how these work. You go to the phone tree, you listen to eight options, you pick the option, it takes you to another list, you pick another option, and then finally, after about five levels, they connect you. They say: If you want an op-

erator, press this, and you press it and you go to some call center in the Philippines. They don't know what you are talking about. This is not consumer-friendly.

Looking at the ingredient list takes 1 second. It is 10 minutes or more when you call that 800 number, and maybe you get a message: I am sorry, we have a large call volume right now, and we will be able to answer your call in 20 minutes. That is not consumer information; that is a scam and a sham.

That is not the only one that is in this DARK bill. The second sham is this idea of a quick response code, like this one in the picture, this square code. Again, as a consumer you can't look at the ingredients and see the answer, if there are GE ingredients, no. Now you have to have not just a phone but a smartphone. You have to hope it has a battery, that it has a photo appliance with it. You have to take a picture of that code, and then that code takes you to some Web site written by the very producer who gives you the answer, maybe, or maybe they lay out a whole architecture of stuff that obfuscates it, confuses you, and you don't really get the answer, when all you needed was a little tiny symbol on the package that indicated whether it had GE ingredients. So, again, how long does that take? Ten minutes per product? Thirty minutes for the first item on your shopping list as you compare three products? That is not consumer-friendly—3 seconds versus 30 minutes—and that is just the first item on your shopping list. There is not one person in this Chamber who truly believes this is a fair substitute for consumer-friendly information. This is a sham and scam No. 2.

If this QR code had a message on it and this message right here written on the back said "There are GE ingredients, and for details, scan this code," that is consumer-friendly. That is all the consumer wants to know. That is all we are asking for—a consumer-friendly alert. Then that QR code for more information is fine. That is perfectly fine. But without it, nobody even knows why it is there. What is it there for? Is this where you find out information about the company? Is this where you find out information about the new products they are going to be putting out? Is this where you find information about special sales that are going on? Nobody has any idea.

Well, the DARK bill doesn't stop with sham No. 1 and sham No. 2. No, it gives us even more fake labeling because we see it says that a form of labeling is to have no label but to put the information on your Web site. Well, to call that a label is simply a misrepresentation—and "misrepresentation" is a fancy word for "lie"—because there is not any information that even appears on the product. None.

So we say: Well, I was told there would be an 800 number. I am not finding it. I was told there might be a box, and I think it is for finding out if there

are GE ingredients. But I don't find that computer code box, no, because they have adopted door No. 3, and door No. 3 is to put something on some form of social media. But what social media? Are you supposed to go to Instagram or Facebook or Twitter? Nobody has any idea.

So now there is nothing—let me repeat: nothing—on the product. So what could be learned in 1 second by a consumer, now the consumer has fully no idea. And because this whole thing is voluntary, lots of products may just choose to put nothing up.

The proponents of the DARK Act say: No, we have a pathway to more information. If companies don't put up information in the form of a barcode or a phone number or something on a social media Web site, well then we will require something in one of those three areas. That requirement down the road still provides no consumer-friendly information. It is a pathway through a hall of mirrors that leads to a hall of mirrors. It never leads to concrete, simple information.

Don't you know that if you told consumers they would have to go to a Web site to find out if there is vitamin D in the product, that would be ridiculous? It should just be printed on the package.

Don't you know if someone were interested in high fructose corn syrup and they were told they had to dial a call center in the Philippines to find out that information, consumers would say that is absurd? We all know that is the case.

Ninety percent of Americans strongly believe—or believe when given the choice—that there should be this information directly on the label. I am rounding up from 89 percent. Let's round it off. When questioned as to whether there should be information on the label to say whether there are genetically engineered ingredients, 9 out of 10 Americans say yes, there should be, and 70 percent say they feel very strongly about this. So here are our constituents, and 9 to 1, they want us to provide information. But up here on Capitol Hill we have Senator after Senator who does not care what their constituents think. They care only what big Monsanto and friends want, which is to deny Americans the right to know. That is irresponsible. That is wrong.

When we look at this number, you can see by how high it is that this is not partisan because it would be impossible to have a big difference—100 percent of one party and 80 percent of another might round off to 90 percent. But that is not the way it is. Whether you are an Independent, Democrat, or Republican, in all 3 groups, 9 out of 10 individuals, plus or minus a few percentage points, say they want this information on the package.

So here we are with this vast difference in ideologies being displayed by the Presidential debate, from the tea party right to the far left and every-

thing in between. There is disagreement on all kinds of things, but on this, all the citizens agree—the right, left, middle, far left, far right—because it is a fundamental freedom in America to use your dollars based on basic, accurate information. That is a basic freedom that a bunch of Senators on this floor want to take away. It is just wrong to take away the States' rights to answer that request, that need, that desire for information on GE ingredients and not to replace it with a national standard. That is just wrong.

There are folks who say: Wait, I want to be on the side of science, and I don't think there is any kind of scientific information that there is any kind of disadvantage to GE products. Well, that is fundamentally wrong. If you think there are no disadvantages, it is because you don't want to know.

There are benefits, and there are disadvantages. For example, recognize that this tool can be used in ways that produce some good results and some not so good results. That is why it is up to the consumer to decide how they want to use their dollars.

On the good side, we can talk about golden rice. There are parts of the world that primarily eat rice. If they have a vitamin A deficiency, there is rice that can be grown that has been genetically modified to supply more vitamin A and makes for a healthier community. That is a positive.

For example, sweet potatoes grown in South Africa are vulnerable to certain viruses, but they have been genetically modified to resist those viruses so there is more substantive food available to the community. As far as we know, there are no particular side effects, so that is a positive.

There are some interesting ideas that occur about edible vaccine technology. This is an alternative to traditional vaccines, and they are working to have transgenic plants used for the production of vaccines that stimulate the human body's natural immune response. Wouldn't that be amazing if we could essentially inoculate against major diseases in the world through some type of GE, as long as there weren't side effects? Who knows, that may end up being a major benefit.

Just as there are scientifically documented positives, there are scientifically documented negatives. For example, let's talk about our waterways. I put up a chart which shows that since the presentation or production of herbicide-resistant crops, the amount of herbicides put on crops in America has soared. We have gone from 7.4 million pounds in 1994 to 160 million pounds by 2012. It has gone up since. All of that glyphosate is basically being sprayed multiple times a year. It gets into the air, it gets into the plants, it gets into the runoff from the fields, and it goes into our waterways. It has an impact because it is a plant killer. That is what an herbicide is. It kills plants. If you put millions of pounds of herbicide into our rivers, it does a lot of damage.

I will not go through all the studies that have noted this damage. Let me just explain that when you kill things at the base of the food chain, you change the entire food chain. This is true for micro-organisms in sea water, which we refer to as marine systems, and it is very true in micro-organisms in freshwater systems.

Micro-organisms form the basis of food chains and provide ecological services. There are a bunch of studies that show the impact of all this plant-killing herbicide running into our rivers. It affects the soil too. Quite frankly, it even creates some potential for an impact on human health.

Let me explain. Two-thirds of the air and rainfall samples tested in Mississippi and Iowa in 2007 and 2008 contain glyphosate. Those are rain samples and air samples, two-thirds of which contained this herbicide. Well, what we know is that not only do humans absorb some therefrom, but they also absorb some because of residuals in the food. A study published in the *Journal of Environmental & Analytical Toxicology* found that humans who consumed glyphosate-treated GMO foods have relatively high levels of glyphosate in their urine because it is in their bodies. We also know that glyphosate has been classified as a probable human carcinogen by the International Agency for Research on Cancer, part of the World Health Organization.

Here we have a probable carcinogen present in such vast quantities—present in the rain, present in the air, present in the residuals on the food. That is a legitimate concern to citizens. Does that mean that it is causing rampant outbreaks of cancer? No, I am not saying that. I am just saying there is a legitimate foundation for individual citizens to say: I am concerned about the runoff into our streams. I am concerned about the heavy application and its impact on local plants and animals. I am concerned about the possibility of absorption of anything that might contribute to cancer. That is the citizens' freedom to have those opinions.

This is not a situation where Members of this body should say: We are smarter than they are, and we don't care that they have scientific concerns because, quite frankly, we want to suppress that information. We don't want to give them a choice. We don't want to let them know. It is just wrong. It is wrong to take away States' rights to provide such basic information and not have a consumer-friendly version at a national level. I will absolutely support a 50-State standard so there is no confusion and no cost of overlapping standards or difficulties in what food goes from what warehouse to what grocery store—absolutely support that—but don't strip States from doing something 9 out of 10 Americans care about and then proceed to bury that and not provide that information in the U.S. Senate.

I encourage my colleagues: Simply say no to this Monsanto Deny Americans the Right to Know Act, the DARK Act. Simply say no. Stand up. Have some respect for this institution.

This is a bill that never went through committee. Not a single phrase of this bill went to committee. This is a new creation put on the floor without juris, without consideration on committee, and no open amendment process. How many colleagues across the aisle cried foul over the past years when Democrats were in charge and didn't allow an amendment process? They insisted they would never vote for cloture unless there was a full amendment process that honored the ideas presented by different Senators. But there is no open amendment process here. So there we are—a bad process, mega influence by Monsanto and friends oppressing and stripping the freedom of American citizens. Let's not let that happen.

I have a host of letters I was planning to read, but I see my colleague from Ohio is wanting to speak to this issue, and in fairness to all sides of this debate or ideas that he might want to present, I am going to stop here. If there is an opening later, I would like to return to the floor because of the calls and letters overwhelmingly from citizens stating they resent the Senators in this body trying to strip them of their right to know.

Thank you, Mr. President.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LANKFORD). The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. PORTMAN. Mr. President, I want to thank my colleague from Oregon, and I am sure he will be back on the floor again to talk about this issue.

COMPREHENSIVE ADDICTION AND RECOVERY BILL

Mr. President, I want to address a couple of other issues quickly. One is the last act that this Senate took last week, which was passage of the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act. I didn't have a chance to speak on it because the Senate adjourned at that point, but I just want to congratulate my colleagues for coming together as Republicans and Democrats. It was a vote of 94 to 1. That never happens around this place. It is because people understand the significance of the challenge of heroin and prescription drug abuse and addiction back in our States and wanted to stand up and put forward Federal legislation that would help make the Federal Government a better partner with State and local governments and nonprofits that are out there in the trenches doing their best, with law enforcement who are trying their darnedest, and others in the emergency medical response community who are trying to deal with this issue.

While traveling the State of Ohio the last 3 days, this Senator heard about it constantly. Before I would give a speech, people would come up and say thank you for dealing with this issue because my daughter, my cousin, or my friend is affected. Today, I was with a group of young people talking about

other issues, and one said that his cousin at 23 years old had just succumbed to an overdose—died from an overdose of heroin.

This is a problem in all of our States. It is a problem where we can help make a difference. I want to congratulate my colleagues, Senator WHITEHOUSE and others, for working with me to put this bill forward. We worked on it over 3 years in a comprehensive way, using the best expertise from around the country.

Now I am urging my colleagues in the House of Representatives to follow suit. Let's pass this legislation. Let's send it to the President's desk for his signature. Let's get this bill working to be able to help our constituents all over this country to better deal with a very real epidemic in our communities.

Now the No. 1 cause of death in my State is overdoses—from these deaths that are occurring from overdoses of heroin and prescription drugs. Again, I congratulate the Senate for acting on that on a bipartisan basis and having thoughtful legislation that is going to make a difference.

READ ALOUD MONTH

Mr. President, I also rise today to speak about something that also affects our young people, which is literacy and learning. This happens to be Read Aloud Month. This U.S. Senate has established the month of March as being the month that we hold up those who read aloud to their kids, because we found it is incredibly important for a child's development—particularly for the ability of a child to become adept at other subjects at school by just being read to and the literacy that results from that.

There is a campaign called the Read Aloud campaign. I congratulate them for the good work they do around the country. They started in my hometown of Cincinnati, OH, so I am very proud of them, but now it is a national effort. In libraries and schools across the country, March is held up as Read Aloud Month, where we encourage parents and other family members to get into the habit of reading to their children, if only for 15 minutes a day. That is all the Read Aloud campaign is asking for. If parents and other caregivers read at least 15 minutes a day to their kids, what an incredible difference it would make.

There is one study that is now quite well known that shows, on average, by the time a child born into poverty reaches age 3, he or she will have heard 30 million fewer words than his or her peers who are not in poverty. What does that mean, 30 million fewer words? It means that those children born into poverty are at a severe disadvantage. It means they can have a lifetime of consequences that are negative for them. The more we learn about the way the brain develops, the more clear it is that verbal skills—like other skills—develop as they are used and atrophy as they are neglected. The younger the children are, the more im-

portant this is. So reading to children, particularly younger children, is incredibly important to their development.

Even though this information is now out there and the Read Aloud campaign is doing a great job of getting the education out there, even with all this information we are told that in 40 percent of families in America today parents and other caregivers are not reading to their kids.

There is a doctor at Cincinnati Children's Hospital, Dr. Tzipi Horowitz-Kraus, who is a real expert on this topic. She stated: "The more you read to your child, the more you help the neurons in the brain to grow and connect." So that is the physiological change that occurs.

We also know a child's vocabulary is largely reflective of the vocabulary at home from their parents and caregivers. There is a 2003 study by Elizabeth Hart and Todd Risley studying the impact of this 30 million word gap we talked about between households in poverty and those of their peers. They found that by age 3 the effects were already apparent. Even at that young age, "trends in the amount of talk, vocabulary growth, and style of interaction were well established and clearly suggested widening gaps to come." That is another study out there about what the impact of this is.

There are a lot of adults who might not know how important reading aloud is and don't feel they have enough to do it, but, again, 15 minutes a day is all they are asking. It adds up quickly and can help close this word gap. As parents, it may be the most important single thing we can do to help our children to be able to learn.

Illiteracy or even what is called functional illiteracy—not being illiterate but not being able to read with proficiency—makes it so much harder to do everything, to earn a living, obviously to get a job, and to participate fully in society. It hurts self-esteem. It hurts personal autonomy. Millions of our friends and neighbors are struggling with these consequences every single day. According to the Department of Education, there are about 32 million adults in the United States who can't read. Nearly one out of every five adults reads below a fifth grade level. Nearly the same percentage of high school graduates cannot read. So one out of every five high school graduates not being able to read is an embarrassment for us as a country, our school system, and certainly what is not going on in our families, which again can help to get these kids off to the right start. For these adults who are functionally illiterate or illiterate, they all started with this disadvantage we are talking about, not having this opportunity at home.

Some parents may say: OK, ROB. How do we afford this, because children's books aren't inexpensive. How do you get the online resources you might want to be able to read to your kids, if