

women who take on these extraordinary challenges, capture the attention and the fascination of the world with their feats of physical and mental endurance. The men and women of the 44th Iditarod race are to be commended and congratulated.

With that, I yield the floor.

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, today I wish to express my opposition to the legislation introduced by Senator ROBERTS to preempt State labeling laws for genetically modified organisms, also known as GMOs.

The Mellman Group released a poll last year that found that 89 percent of Americans support mandatory labeling of GMOs. The calls and letters I receive from California constituents confirm widespread support for this policy. Since 2015, I have received more than 90,000 letters and emails from constituents who want a mandatory labeling standard. Since the beginning of this year, my office has received nearly 2,000 calls in favor of mandatory labeling.

Clearly, the public wants their food to be labeled in a consistent and transparent manner. However, Senator ROBERTS' proposal would preempt voter-passed mandatory GMO labeling laws in Connecticut, Maine, and Vermont. Overriding these State laws would be a step backward for consumer knowledge.

I recognize that the food industry cannot comply with 50 different State labeling laws. That is why I have cosponsored legislation introduced by Senator JEFF MERKLEY to create a consistent, transparent Federal standard on how to label foods that contain GMO ingredients. This legislation would require food producers to add a statement or symbol after the ingredient list to state that the product contains GMO ingredients. Companies would be given four options to meet the requirement.

In contrast, Senator ROBERTS' bill makes it more difficult for consumers to find out what is in their food. It requires the Department of Agriculture to create new, voluntary labeling guidance, despite the fact that the Food and Drug Administration already created voluntary guidance.

Furthermore, Senator ROBERTS' bill allows a confusing array of options for disclosure beyond labeling. This includes 1-800 numbers, Web sites, smartphone applications, and social media posts.

In my view, the only fair and consistent way to label food is on the package in a clear, straightforward, and consistent manner. Consumers do not have time to scan barcodes on food packages or to call 1-800 numbers. Consumers want the information they need to make the best choices for them and their families readily available on packaging. And I believe they deserve to have that information.

I want to make it clear that I recognize that the Federal Government and scientists agree that GMO products are

safe. I also realize that California farmers may need to rely on genetic engineering to address challenges such as climate change and disease. But I do not understand why industry is so opposed to informing consumers of how their food was produced. The industry says it should only be required to label foods when there is a human health reason to do so.

However, the Federal Government has always had labeling requirements for food that aren't due to a human health reason. These requirements exist because they allow consumers to make informed choices in the marketplace. For example, the Federal Government requires juice that was made from concentrate to be labeled "made from concentrate." The Federal Government requires foods processed with irradiation to be labeled as such. The Federal Government has a specific labeling requirement for what constitutes ground beef based on what parts of a cow is used, the fat content, and how it is processed.

During this election season, many Americans have expressed a view that Washington is out of touch with the rest of the country. So I want to ask, does Washington really want to overrule consumers who want GMO labeling? Does Congress know better than the majority of American consumers?

In my view, we should trust consumers and make sure they have the information they want on the food they buy. As such, I urge my colleagues to oppose Senator ROBERTS' preemption legislation. Instead, I ask my colleagues to engage in a meaningful discussion for how we can create a mandatory standard that is flexible for industry but gives consumers the information they want.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SULIVAN). The Senator from Kansas.

Mr. ROBERTS. Mr. President, I wish to start off my remarks with regard to the bill that is before us. There is an article from The Hill newspaper, and it is quoting Julie Borlaug, who is the granddaughter of Norman Borlaug, a University of Minnesota graduate who helped to spark the green revolution in agriculture technology that is credited with saving more than 1 billion people from dying of hunger.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the article from The Hill be printed in the RECORD.

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

[From The Hill, Mar. 16, 2016]

SAFE, PROVEN BIOTECHNOLOGY DESERVES NON-STIGMATIZING NATIONAL LABELING STANDARD

(By Julie Borlaug)

Global hunger is one of the most pressing challenges of the 21st century and the problem will only get worse if the U.S. Senate fails to take action and prevent a costly state-by-state patchwork of labeling mandates for food containing genetically modified organisms (GMOs).

In a Senate Agriculture Committee mark-up last week, Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.)

correctly noted that "science is an essential piece of the puzzle in addressing food insecurity." The senator also praised the legacy of my grandfather, Dr. Norman Borlaug, a University of Minnesota graduate who helped spark the green revolution in agricultural technology that is credited with saving more than 1 billion people from dying of hunger.

I am glad to see my grandfather's work praised. And, as an associate director for the Borlaug Institute for International Agriculture, I want to see his work, and the work of his fellow agricultural scientists, protected. That means ensuring that innovations in agricultural biotechnology aren't sent to the dustbin of history, leaving future generations asking why good solutions were abandoned.

It really comes down to a simple label. In July, Vermont is set to become the first state to begin enforcing a GMO labeling mandate. The impacts will be felt on store shelves and in science labs around this country. Make no mistake—these state labeling efforts are not about a so-called "right to know" but are about enabling activists to drive GMOs out of the marketplace. Leaders in the labeling movement acknowledge this, with one saying "If we have it labeled, then we can organize people not to buy it."

These dangerous efforts undermine the critical importance of biotechnology and the role it plays in feeding the world. With the help of modern science and GMOs, farmers now have the ability to produce crops that better withstand droughts and require fewer pesticides. They can adapt genetic codes to acclimate to new environments, and ensure that crops grow well despite inhospitable climates.

You cannot be anti-hunger and be anti-GMO. GMOs not only make farming more sustainable, they directly impact national and global food security at a time when warming temperatures and rising populations mean that those living in poverty will face increasingly unstable supplies of food.

The safety of GMOs is as clear as their benefits. Every major scientific organization that has examined this issue has concluded that they are safe as any other food. Those denying their safety are denying the science.

By allowing state-mandated on package labeling of GMO foods, Congress would be turning its back on decades of advancements in biotechnology and allowing a small group of activists to deny millions of people the tools that will prevent starvation and death. We cannot allow that to happen.

Senate Agriculture Committee Chairman Pat Roberts (R-Kan.) has put forward a bipartisan proposal that would establish national standards for food made with genetically-engineered ingredients. The Biotech Labeling Solutions Act would prevent a costly state-by-state patchwork of labeling mandates. It would also help ensure that providing greater information could go hand-in-hand with providing greater education at a national level about the safety and importance of GMO crops. The Senate Agriculture Committee supported moving his bill to the full Senate by a 14-6 bipartisan vote.

Now, we need senators of both parties to come together to support this common-sense approach.

Sixteen years ago, my grandfather wrote that the world would soon have the agricultural technologies available to feed the 8.3 billion people anticipated in the next quarter of a century. The more pertinent question is whether farmers and ranchers will be permitted to use these technologies.

The members of the Senate will decide that very question in their votes on the Biotech Labeling Solutions Act. For the sake of science and the world, the answer needs to be yes.

Mr. ROBERTS. Quoting from the article, Ms. Borlaug said:

I am glad to see my grandfather's work praised. . . . Senate Agriculture Committee Chairman Pat Roberts . . . has put forward a bipartisan proposal that would establish national standards for food made with genetically-engineered ingredients. The Biotech Labeling Solutions Act would prevent a costly state-by-state patchwork of labeling mandates. It would also help ensure that providing greater information could go hand-in-hand with providing greater education at a national level about the safety and importance of GMO crops. . . . Sixteen years ago, my grandfather wrote that the world would soon have the agriculture technologies available to feed the 8.3 billion people anticipated in the next quarter of a century. The more pertinent question is whether farmers and ranchers will be permitted to use these technologies.

I rise again to discuss my amendment numbered 3450 on biotechnology labeling solutions. There has been a lot of discussion about this amendment and this topic in general. That is a good thing. We should be talking about our food, we should be talking about our farmers and producers, and we should be talking about our consumers as well. It is important—extremely important—to have an honest discussion and an open exchange with dialogue. After all, that is what we do in the Senate or at least that is what we are supposed to do. We are here to discuss difficult issues, craft compromised solutions, and finally vote in the best interest of our constituents. That is what we are doing here today: exercising our responsibility to cast a vote for what is in the best interest of those who sent us here.

Let's start with discussing difficult issues. The basic issue at hand is agriculture biotechnology labeling. If you have heard any of my previous remarks, you have heard me say time and time and time again that biotechnology products are safe, but you don't have to take my word for it. The Agriculture Committee held a hearing late last year where all three agencies in charge of reviewing biotechnology testified before our members. Over and over again the EPA, the FDA, and the USDA told us that these products are safe—safe for the environment, safe for other plants, and safe for our food supply. This is the gold standard on what is safe with regard to agriculture biotechnology. Not only are these products safe, but they also provide benefits to the entire value chain from producer to consumer. Through biotechnology, our farmers are able to grow more on less land using less water, less fuel, and less fertilizer, but the difficult issue we are debating today is about more than recognizing the fact that biotechnology is safe. No, today our decision is about whether to prevent a wrecking ball from hitting our entire food supply chain. The difficult issue for us to address is what to do about the patchwork of biotechnology labeling laws that will soon wreak havoc on the flow of interstate commerce, agriculture, and food prod-

ucts in every supermarket and every grocery store up and down Main Street of every community in America. That is what this is about. It is not about safety, it is not about health, and it is not about nutrition. It is all about marketing.

What we face today is a handful of States that have chosen to enact labeling requirements on information that has nothing to do with health, safety, or nutrition. Unfortunately, the impact of these decisions will be felt all across the country. Those decisions impact the farmers in the fields who would be pressured to grow less efficient crops so manufacturers could avoid these demonizing labels. Those labeling laws will impact distributors who have to spend more money to sort different labels for different States. Those labeling laws will ultimately impact consumers who will suffer from higher priced food. It will cost \$1,050 per year for an average family of four. That is right. If we do nothing, it is not manufacturers that will pay the ultimate price, it is the consumer.

A study released this year found that changes in the production or labeling of most of the Nation's food supply for a single State would impact citizens in each of our home States. The total annual increased cost of doing nothing today, such as not voting for cloture, could be as much as \$82 billion every year. That is a pretty costly cloture vote. That is 1,050 bucks tacked onto each family's grocery bill, and that is a direct hit to their pocketbooks. Let me repeat that. If we fail to act today—if we do not have cloture and get to this compromise bill—the cost to consumers would total as much as \$82 billion a year or 1,050 bucks for hard-working American families. I don't think that is what my colleagues want. I don't think they want to be responsible for that: a cloture vote with an \$82 billion price tag? Come on.

This is the difficult issue we must address and the question is, How do we fix it? That is why we have crafted a compromise solution and put it on the floor for debate and action. The amendment before us today stops this wrecking ball before any more damage can be done.

Two weeks ago, the Agriculture Committee passed a bill with a bipartisan vote of 14 to 6. I am very proud of that legislation. It stopped the State-by-State patchwork and provided a national voluntary standard for biotechnology food products. For the first time, the Federal Government would set a science-based standard allowing consumers to demand the marketplace provide more information. Consumers are growing more and more interested in their food, and that is a good thing. We, as consumers, should learn more about where our food comes from and what it takes to keep our food supply the safest, the most abundant, and the most affordable in the world. However, the role of government in this space is to ensure that information regarding

safety, health, and nutritional value are expressed directly to consumers, but the information in question today has nothing to do with safety or health or nutrition, so the responsibility and opportunity to inform the consumers falls on the marketplace. If consumers want more information, they demand it by voting with their pocketbooks in the aisles of the grocery store.

As our bipartisan bill has come to the floor, I have heard concerns that this voluntary standard is not enough for our consumers. Yet again we worked with our colleagues on both sides of the aisle. The legislation before us goes further than the committee-passed bill. This legislation addresses concerns with a voluntary-only approach by providing an incentive for the marketplace to provide consumers with more information.

To my friends on this side of the aisle, this legislation allows the market to work. To my friends on that side of the aisle, if the marketplace does not live up to their commitments, if information is not made available to consumers, then this legislation holds the markets accountable by instituting a mandatory standard. It is not just any mandatory standard, it is a standard that provides the same options and mechanisms for compliance as outlined and stated publicly by our Secretary of Agriculture, Tom Vilsack.

Simply put, the legislation before us provides us an immediate and comprehensive solution to the unworkable State-by-State patchwork labeling laws. As chairman of the sometimes powerful Senate Agriculture Committee, I believe this is a true compromise. Like any bill, it is not perfect, and I know that, but to those who criticize this legislation in one breath and say they want a compromise in the next breath, I ask: Where is your plan? Where is your solution? We have heard the distinguished Senator from Oregon many times on this floor—not a stranger to this floor—criticizing this compromise. I appreciate, and I am sure we all appreciate, his passion. I disagree with his views, but I appreciate that he did put his plan into a bill and put it out for public debate. What I don't understand is why he doesn't want to vote on it. Why would you put a bill out there and decide not to vote on it? Why would you not vote for cloture so you can get to a vote on your bill? We could have voted on his legislation today. Yet when he was presented with the option to take a vote, he declined. I have read the press release where he described the compromise as maintaining the status quo.

If the truth be known, this compromise achieves just the opposite. In fact, voting no today is the only way that maintains the status quo. Voting no today does nothing to stop the wrecking ball. Voting no today ensures that the instability in the marketplace continues. Voting no today puts farmers and all of agriculture at risk. Voting no today negatively impacts the

daily lives of everybody in the food chain from the farmer who will be forced to plant fence row to fence row of a crop that is less efficient to the grain elevator that will have to adjust storage options to separate the types of grain, to the manufacturer that will need different labels for different States, to the distributor that will need expanded storage for sorting, and to the retailer who may be unable to afford offering low-cost, private-label products, and, finally, to the consumer who will be forced to pay for all this additional cost to the tune of \$82 billion.

Now we come to our final task as elected officials of this body taking a vote. But before we do, we should all know that never before—never before in my experience as chairman of the House Agriculture Committee and chairman of the Senate Agriculture Committee and all the years I have had the privilege to serve on both committees—we have never seen a bill in the Agricultural Committee with so much support, never. Over 800 organizations all across the food and agriculture perspective have a stake in this bill. It is at the national and State and local levels. They all support the bill. The bill has the support of the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture, the American Farm Bureau, and many, many more.

Virtually every farm group is in town. I just talked to the American Soybean Association this past week. One farmer said: Hey, if I cannot have agriculture biological crops with regard to increasing the yield that I plant, what am I going to do? Am I going to plant fence row to fence row? Am I going to lose in this situation when farming income is declining and farm credit is getting tighter?

The fundamental role of the Agriculture Committee is to protect American farmers and ranchers who provide a safe, abundant, and affordable food supply to a very troubled and hungry world. So I will be voting yes to do just that, and I encourage my colleagues to do the same. Voting no today means telling your constituents next week that you are raising their grocery bill by over \$1,000. Good luck with that.

It is a pretty simple vote. You are either for agriculture or you are not.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Indiana.

Mr. DONNELLY. Mr. President, later this morning we continue to work on whether to consider a food labeling bill here in the Senate. As a dad, I know this bill is about much more than just words or symbols or a label. It is about the confidence we have in the food we eat and the food we feed our children. As a Hoosier, I also know this bill is about preserving confidence in a long and proud Indiana tradition of growing the food that feeds our communities and provides a safe and reliable food supply for the world. Whether you are a parent or a farmer, a Republican or a

Democrat, our objectives in this debate should be the same: to provide consumers with access to accurate information about the food we eat and to do so in a way that does not mislead consumers into falsely thinking their food is unsafe.

I believe strongly that consumers, our families, our kids, moms and dads, brothers and sisters deserve to feel confident in the food we feed our families. I want to know how much sugar is in my ice cream and how many calories are in that roast beef sandwich that I love so much. It is clear from this debate that many Americans want to know even more about where and how our food is produced. I believe we should have that information, and it should be easy to find.

It is also common sense. This information should be delivered in a way that is fair, that is objective, and that is based in sound science. I have heard from many Hoosier farmers who are very concerned that some labels or symbols on packages would amount, in consumers' minds, to warning labels and could send a misleading message that the safe and healthy products our farmers grow—think of sweet corn in our fields—are somehow unhealthy or even dangerous.

This morning, my good friend, Senator TOM CARPER from Delaware, and I filed an amendment that builds off the framework of the proposal before us today. A framework I first suggested in the Agriculture Committee markup of this very bill. It creates a national voluntary bioengineered food labeling standard. It stipulates that if food companies fail to make sufficient information available, then a national food labeling standard for bioengineering becomes mandatory.

Our amendment works for farmers, it works for manufacturers, and it works for our families. It establishes ambitious goals for the availability of information related to bioengineering by requiring that after 3 years, 80 percent of the food products covered by the legislation would provide direct access to information. If the food industry does not meet this threshold, then the labeling requirement becomes mandatory.

Our amendment also requires clear and direct access to information on bioengineering. This could include explicit disclosures, such as organic or GMO-free, or voluntarily disclosing bioengineering on the box. Or companies choosing to participate in the voluntary program could use various electronic methods of disclosure, such as a Web site or a QR code in conjunction with a phone number that clearly indicates to consumers—to our families—where they can find more information and provides direct access to that information. This is important because our shared goal is to provide direct access to information about the contents of our food to everyone, whether you have access to the Internet or a smartphone or a regular phone. So let me repeat: Our amendment allows for

electronic disclosure to be used only in conjunction with a phone number, and both methods would have to provide direct access to information on the product's contents.

Finally, our amendment preserves State consumer protection laws and remedies. States write laws to protect our citizens from mislabeled products and to provide for remedies in case of false or misleading statements. Our amendment preserves those laws.

Consumers, our families, farmers, and food producers are looking to the Senate for leadership. After months of discussion, we have been unable to agree yet on a proposal that gives consumers the information they want in a responsible way, but the issue remains. This will be another week of uncertainty for producers, for manufacturers, for our families who do not have the information they want, and for the producers and manufacturers I mentioned who don't know what is expected.

I am going to continue to work on this issue with Senator ROBERTS and Senator STABENOW. I strongly encourage all my colleagues to consider the ideas that Senator CARPER and I have put forward and to try to work with us to find a solution that works for America.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I yield back.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. MERKLEY. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

I am rising to speak to this issue from a simple American citizen point of view. The American citizen wants the right to know what is in their food. They want to know how many calories; they want to know what the minerals and the vitamins are and what the ingredients are. It is a simple standard because it is important to an individual to know what you are putting in your mouth, what you are putting on the table for your families and your children.

This is a principle that we have honored time and again on our packages. We proceeded to put on our packages whether fish is farm raised or wild caught because citizens wanted to know. It makes a difference to them. It is their choice. It is their judgment. We put on our packages whether juice is from concentrate or is fresh because citizens wanted to know. It is important to them. It is their right to know.

We put the list of ingredients on the package in a simple format, not so that someone can spend an hour trying to research what is in it. No, we have a simple 1-second test. You pick up the food off the counter, you turn it over, you look at the list of ingredients and you say, this has the vitamin C I wanted; this has the calories I wanted—the 1-second test.

That is what is at stake because the bill that is before us right now kills the 1-second test. It kills immediate access to information for consumers. It says