

Which path will Congress follow: Mandatory or voluntary GMO labeling?

The fight over the labeling of genetically engineered food is heating up on Capitol Hill, as safety advocates mount a campaign to beat back industry-backed legislation that would leave the nation without a mandatory labeling standard.

Rep. Mike Pompeo (R-Kan.) introduced the Safe and Accurate Food Labeling Act of 2015 last week with lead co-sponsor Rep. G.K. Butterfield (D-N.C.). The bill would create a voluntary federal labeling standard, while pre-empting states from passing their own mandatory labeling laws for genetically modified — or GMO — foods.

Food safety advocates say lawmakers will ultimately balk at the bill once they discover its implications.

“Members of Congress are really looking for a federal solution here,” said Colin O’Neil, director of government affairs for the Center for Food Safety. “I think we’re going to get to that rubber meets the road point where members realize they are being sold on a bill that doesn’t solve anything consumers are asking for, which is a mandatory labeling standard.”

“Clearly this is a legislative Hail Mary designed to not only block states like Vermont from giving people the right to know what they’re eating, but make it much harder for the FDA to craft a national mandatory labeling solution,” said Scott Faber, vice president of government affairs at the Environmental Working Group.

The groups instead are pushing Congress to pass the Genetically Engineered Food Right-to-Know Act, introduced in the Senate earlier this month by Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.), and in the House by Peter DeFazio (D-Ore.). Their bill would require labels for all foods produced using genetically engineering ingredients and prohibit manufacturers from labeling genetically modified foods as natural.

The Obama administration has said little on the GMO issue, despite a campaign vow that, under his administration, “We’ll let folks know whether their food has been genetically modified.”

Obama’s silence since those 2007 remarks has raised questions about whether the president would sign the Pompeo-Butterfield bill.

Read full, original article: [GMO bill intensifies federal food fight](#)