

WA Attorney General sues Grocery Manufacturers Association over state GMO labeling campaign

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The Washington Attorney General's Office is seeking at least \$14 million from a food industry association, alleging it tried to secretly finance the campaign against a GMO labeling initiative in 2013, according to previously sealed court documents released [February 17].

State attorneys are scheduled to present their case [February 19] in Thurston County Superior Court, seeking an immediate judgment against the Grocery Manufacturers Association, whose members contributed \$11 million to defeat Initiative 522.

In a counter motion, the association seeks to have the lawsuit dismissed, arguing that its members were exercising their First Amendment right to speak with one voice.

The case has been pending since 2013 when the state sued the association, alleging the trade group sought to shield brand name companies from criticism for opposing I-522, which would have required the food industry to label products with genetically modified ingredients. The measure received 49 percent of the vote and failed.

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"GMA engaged in an elaborate scheme to unlawfully shield its members' contributions from public scrutiny," Attorney General Bob Ferguson said in a written statement. "They need to be held accountable."

The association issued a statement stating that it had no interest in keeping the records sealed.

"These documents simply confirm GMA's efforts to exercise its First Amendment right to act as a single spokesperson for the common interest of its members," according to the association.

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The AG has asked the court to levy "at a minimum" a penalty equal to the \$14 million collected by Defense of Brands by late 2013.

Read full, original post: [Washington AG seeks \\$14 million from food industry in GMO campaign suit](#)