

Food lobby appeals \$18 million fine over campaign against GMO labeling in Washington state

The packaged food and drink industry will try to persuade a Washington state appeals court ... that exercising its First Amendment rights required withholding the names of the companies that spent \$11 million to defeat a 2013 initiative that would have required labels on food with genetically modified ingredients.

The Grocery Manufacturers Association argues that funneling the contributions through the trade association shielded companies from boycotts and even death threats, like the ones their members suffered for opposing a similar GMO proposition in California the year before.

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GMA is appealing a record-breaking \$18 million fine handed down in 2016 by Thurston County Superior Court Judge Anne Hirsch. Hirsch ruled that GMA intentionally broke the law by belatedly naming the companies that contributed to the “No on Initiative 522” campaign.

The penalty is by far the largest ever levied in the U.S. for not reporting political activities.

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In a similar case, the anti-GMO organization Food Democracy Now has appealed a \$319,281 fine for failing to name donors who contributed to the “yes” on I-522 campaign. The appeals court will hear oral arguments in that case June 25 in Tacoma.

Read full, original post: [Foodmakers to argue Washington's \\$18M fine unconstitutional](#)