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Murkowski Continues Fight Against Frankenfish, Moves to Block FDA Commissioner Nominee

Senator: “Voluntary Labeling of GE Salmon is Not Adequate”

U.S. Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska) continued her fight against genetically engineered (GE) salmon by announcing in the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee that she would block confirmation proceedings of the nominee to be FDA Commissioner, Dr. Robert Califf, on the Senate floor if her concerns are not resolved. Murkowski made clear that she intends to block Dr. Califf's confirmation until she receives assurance from the FDA that it will require mandatory labeling of GE salmon as it becomes available for human consumption.

In today's HELP committee executive session, Senator Murkowski voted to move Dr. Califf's nomination forward to be considered by the full Senate, saying:

“Dr. Califf's nomination hearing was just 2 days before the FDA made its announcement that they were going to move forward with allowing genetically engineered fish for the first time for human consumption. I have to admit I was really taken aback that he was not direct with me. He clearly knows that's a priority of Alaskans and certainly this Senator. I said at that time I need to have an understanding of where the FDA is going on this issue and I would put a hold on his nomination as it moves forward. We cannot put a hold on anybody until they have moved out of committee. That's what we're doing here today.

“What I would like to make clear to my colleagues is that we have attempted to address some of the issues that I have raised through the appropriations bill that we moved forward in December. We included language that would require the FDA to not allow the introduction into interstate commerce of any product containing genetically engineered salmon until the FDA publishes final labeling guidelines. I want the assurances that in fact is what is going to happen. I want to make sure that the FDA knows that voluntary labeling guidelines really are not sufficient. It does not comply with what is now law. I want to make sure, be very, very certain, that when we are talking about these genetically engineered fish for human consumption, voluntary labeling is not adequate. So I'm going to be pushing for further conversations with Dr. Califf on this. I will vote to move him out of committee today, but I just want my friends and colleagues to be on notice that I have these concerns and I would like to get them resolved before his name moves forward to the Senate floor.”



(Click image to watch video.)

Background: Last November the FDA announced its approval of genetically engineered salmon for human consumption. Murkowski has long been adamantly opposed to the approval of GE salmon, and in response to this announcement inserted a provision in the appropriations process **to require mandatory labeling of Frankenfish**. At that time she also announced that she would **block the confirmation** of Dr. Califf to be FDA Commissioner.

Murkowski is chairman of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee and the Interior Appropriations Subcommittee.

Permalink: <http://www.murkowski.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2016/1/murkowski-continues-fight-against-frankenfish-moves-to-block-fda-commissioner-nominee>