

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



REPRESENTATIVE GERAN TARR

House Bill 32: GMO Labeling

Sponsor Statement

“An act requiring labeling of genetically modified food products sold in Alaska...”

Alaskans hold a fundamental belief that they have a right to know what is in their food. This bill would require labeling of genetically modified food products sold in Alaska. Genetically modified organisms are plants or animals modified to include the genetic material from a non-related species. For example, Atlantic salmon can be modified with ocean pout and Chinook salmon genes to enlarge the species’ natural size and speed up the growth pattern.

Alaskans have already vocally opposed GM salmon, dubbed *Frankenfish*. Other examples include apples genetically modified to slow browning, with no health benefits, and corn crops modified with *Bacillus thuringiensis* bacteria to resist herbicides and pesticides. We need to know about other food products that we purchase, eat, and feed to our families.

Many dieticians have environmental concerns about GM crops, such as increased pesticide use and pesticide resistant weeds. Alaskans recognize the risks of losing genetic diversity in food crops as well as potential health concerns associated with consumption of GMO food products. While more research needs to be done on health issues, the loss of crop diversity and increased pesticide usage are well documented and cause for concern.

There is a growing global movement to demand labeling GMOs and allow consumers the opportunity to choose whether they want to consume GM products. The United States and Canada are the only two industrialized nations that do not require labeling.

I ask for your consideration and support for GMO labeling so that Alaskans can be fully informed about their food supply and make individual choices based on science.