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**CONTACT:** Andrew Behar, (510) 735-8151, [abehar@asyousow.org](mailto:abehar@asyousow.org)  
Lucia von Reusner, (617) 482-0800, [LvonReusner@greencentury.com](mailto:LvonReusner@greencentury.com)  
Scott Faber, (202) 939-9127, [sfaber@ewg.org](mailto:sfaber@ewg.org)

**Investors Call For Food Companies to Stay out of Washington State GMO Battle**  
*Companies that gave \$46 million to stop California GMO labeling risk negative brand reputation if they fund effort to stop I-522 initiative for transparent labeling of food*

Companies that donated funds to oppose ballot initiatives to require the labeling of products containing genetically modified organisms (GMOs) are facing new pressure from shareholders to stay out of future elections.

Leading up to the vote on Washington State's ballot initiative to require GMO labeling, As You Sow, the Green Century Equity Fund, the Environmental Working Group (EWG), and the U.S. Public Interest Research Group (U.S. PIRG) are filing resolutions asking the top corporate donors to the opposition of the California GMO labeling ballot initiative to refrain from using corporate funds to influence political elections. Investors note that many of the companies that contributed to anti-Prop 37 measures experienced significant consumer backlash on social media sites and were the subject of consumer boycotts.

"Companies that get involved in highly controversial public policy issues risk alienating their consumer base," noted Lucia von Reusner, Shareholder Advocate for [Green Century Capital Management](#). "Using shareholder funds to publicly oppose transparency and the public's right to know threatens to erode consumer trust, and exposes the company to significant risks as a result."

A July 2013 [New York Times poll](#) found that 93% of Americans favor labeling of foods containing GMOs. In a 2010 [Harris Poll](#), nearly half of respondents indicated that if alternative options were available, they would shop elsewhere if they learned that a business they patronized had contributed to a candidate or a cause that they opposed, and in a 2012 [Bannon Communications poll](#), 79% of respondents said they would refuse to buy a company's product or services to protest its political spending.

According to Andrew Behar, CEO of [As You Sow](#), "By spending money to influence the outcome of ballot initiatives and other political issues, companies are sending a message to their

customers. In the case of GMO labeling, they are saying ‘we don’t want you to know what is in our products.’ This creates material risk for investors based on negative brand reputation.”

To date, As You Sow has filed resolutions at Monsanto, E.I DuPont de Nemours, and Dow Chemical, and intends to file a shareholder resolution at General Mills and Abbott Laboratories, which combined gave over \$17 million to defeat the CA labeling initiative. The Green Century Equity Fund plans to file at Kraft Foods Group, which gave \$2 million, and Environmental Working Group plans to file at Coca-Cola and Pepsi, which combined donated \$4.2 million. Other companies being contacted by investors include ConAgra Foods, Kellogg, Campbell Soup, J.M. Smucker, Hershey, Hormel Foods, Dean Foods, McCormick & Company, Mondelez International, Dole, Hillshire Brands, Mead-Johnson Nutrition, Bayer, Syngenta AG, Nestle, Smithfield, Del Monte Produce, H.J. Heinz, Mars, Unilever, Grupo Bimbo, Bumble Bee Foods, Ocean Spray Cranberries, Sara Lee, Cargill, Welch’s, Land O’ Lakes, Sunny Delight Beverages, Wrigley, and Tree Top.

“The polling is clear, citizens and consumers overwhelmingly approve of labeling GMOs and overwhelmingly disapprove of corporate money in elections,” said Blair Bowie, Democracy Advocate at [U.S. PIRG](#). “Any corporation that spends against this ballot initiative, whether directly or through a dark money group like the Grocery Manufacturers Association (GMA) risks its reputation and warrants the question, what could be so important to hide that it’s worth skewing our democratic process to do so?”

Scott Faber, Vice President of Government Affairs at [EWG](#) says, “American consumers simply want the same rights as consumers in 64 other nations that require GMO labeling. Smart companies increasingly recognize that the real cost of lost brand reputation and consumer loyalty far outweighs the imaginary costs of labeling.” Faber is also the Executive Director of [Just Label It](#), a national GMO labeling organization.

The top 50 corporate donors who supported the “No on 37” campaign in California will also receive a letter signed by 30 investors representing \$11 billion in assets under management, urging the companies to stay out of elections on controversial public policy issues.

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**As You Sow** is a nonprofit organization that promotes environmental and social corporate responsibility through shareholder advocacy, coalition building, and innovative legal strategies. For more information visit [www.asyousow.org](http://www.asyousow.org).

**Green Century Capital Management** is an environmental responsible investment advisory firm that manages two mutual funds – the fossil fuel free Balanced Fund and the Equity Fund, which invests in the longest running socially responsible index. Founded by a partnership of non-profit environmental advocacy organizations in 1991, Green Century provides people who care about a clean, healthy planet the opportunity to keep their money out of environmentally irresponsible companies and use the leverage of their investment dollars to encourage environmentally responsible corporate behavior.

[www.greencentury.com](http://www.greencentury.com)

**Environmental Working Group** is a national environmental health research and advocacy organization.

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