

require that whenever an HIV test is conducted using federal funds that every reasonable effort is made to find and disclose to the tested individuals the results, together with appropriate counseling. Never again should anyone ever be denied the knowledge of an HIV diagnosis or the medical care that can save their lives.

I am hopeful that Congress in the remainder of the 106th Congress will include this life saving proposal in an appropriate legislative vehicle headed to the President's desk.

COMMEMORATING THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE WILMER EYE INSTITUTE AT JOHNS HOPKINS

HON. CLIFF STEARNS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 1, 2000

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, today I pay tribute to the Wilmer Eye Institute at Johns Hopkins in Baltimore, Maryland. The Institute celebrated its 75th anniversary in April of this year and is known throughout the world for its outstanding staff and exceptional care that is delivered at the facility.

The Wilmer Eye Institute has been designated as the best overall department of ophthalmology in the country. This distinction marks the fifth consecutive year that it has received this honor. This is the first year that Wilmer has been designated best in all categories by the Ophthalmology Times, which includes best overall, best research, best clinical, and best residency. The fact that it is the only department to be given such recognition by a peer survey of department chairmen and directors of residency programs across the United States makes this an even greater honor.

The Wilmer Institute has an interesting history. Back in the 1920's, Mrs. Aida Breckenridge, who suffered from glaucoma, was treated by Dr. William Holland Wilmer. To show her gratitude Mrs. Breckenridge persuaded 700 other grateful patients to build an eye hospital to honor him. Through her efforts \$3.7 million was raised and the Wilmer Eye Institute was dedicated in 1929. It was the first eye hospital to combine patient care with teaching and research.

Since it was founded, the Institute has made many significant contributions throughout the years. In 1947, physicians on staff at Wilmer were responsible for writing the textbook on the subject of Neuroophthalmology and are still considered to be the authority on this subject.

I would like to mention several major achievements made by Wilmer Institute to correct diseases that impair eye sight. In 1956, scientists at Wilmer discovered that excess oxygen in incubators causes retinal damage in many premature infants. This discovery resulted in a dramatic decrease in the number of blind preemies.

Then, in 1979, the Dana Center under the auspices of Wilmer opened the first and only preventive ophthalmology center in the United States. The Center has been instrumental in saving the sight of millions of people all over the world. The Dana Center can list among its many accomplishments the following discoveries by its researchers; overexposure to ultra-

violet light from the sun significantly increases the risk of developing cataracts; demonstrated the link between smoking and cataracts; found that glaucoma strikes African-Americans at five times rate of white Americans, and are developing more effective screening techniques for this disease; and the Center was also instrumental in leading to the development of the first safe drug to treat and control river blindness.

Perhaps one of the most meaningful discoveries made by its researchers occurred in 1983 when Vitamin A capsules were given to children in developing countries to prevent blindness. Another benefit of this discovery was a 30 percent drop in the death rate among these children.

The Wilmer researchers continued to make other noteworthy discoveries throughout the 1980s. In 1987, the Institute developed one of the most effective eye drops to treat the eye pressure caused by glaucoma. Cornea surgeons at Wilmer successfully used excimer laser energy to erase scars on the cornea which delayed and in some cases eliminated the need for a transplant.

These are but a few of the many, many contributions that have been made since the founding of the Wilmer Institute 75 years ago. I believe we all owe Mrs. Breckenridge our gratitude for her keen insight and tireless efforts to promote the establishment of this premiere eye institute.

Mr. Speaker, I can't speak highly enough about the Wilmer Institute which is responsible for preventing the loss of sight of millions of people around the world. It is precisely for this reason that it is regarded as the best eye hospital in the world by doctors surveyed in the U.S. News and Report. It has proven time and time again that it is on cutting edge when it comes to treatment of eye disorders. I'm not surprised the first ophthalmic genetic center in the United States was established at Wilmer.

The leading causes of blindness are cataracts, infection, diabetes, macular degeneration, and glaucoma. In the words of Dr. Morton Goldberg, Chairman of the Wilmer Eye Institute, "My prognosis for the future of eye care and eye research is higher than it ever has been." This type of optimism from the number one ophthalmology institution in the country should be very comforting for every individual who has a history of eye disease in his or her family.

Many of us here in Congress have had first hand experience with being treated at the Wilmer Institute and know that it has and will continue to do an outstanding job in caring for its patients. Let me offer my congratulations and best wishes to the staff for their years of hardwork and dedication. Congratulations to the Wilmer Institute at Johns Hopkins in Baltimore, Maryland as they celebrate their 75th anniversary this year.

GENETIC ENGINEERING: A TECHNOLOGY AHEAD OF THE SCIENCE AND PUBLIC POLICY?

HON. DENNIS J. KUCINICH

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 1, 2000

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, genetically engineered (GE) food is and should be con-

troversial. However, one voice has tended to dominate official discourse on the subject—that of the agri-business industry. These corporations and their paid public relations spokespersons have claimed: that GE food is identical to foods bred by selective (traditional) breeding; GE food is safe; GE food is associated with good environmental practices; and GE food will cure world hunger. Federal regulators have largely left these claims unchallenged, permitting the industry to introduce GE food rapidly and widely without producing scientific evidence to back their claims.

The public is skeptical. There is a growing popular movement that is critical of GE food promises and suspicious of its industry proponents. In other countries, consumers have flatly rejected GE food, and opposition to GE food is growing in this country. I believe that GE food is an example of a radically new technology, the massive commercialization of which has out-paced science and public policy.

In this article, I wish to examine the industry's claims and scrutinize federal actions. I will then present alternatives.

IS GE FOOD JUST LIKE TRADITIONAL FOOD?

There are significant and obvious differences between the genesis of traditional food and the manufacturing of GE food. Scientists note that conventional breeders rely on processes that occur in nature (such as sexual and asexual reproduction) to develop new plants. By contrast, genetic engineers use "gene guns" and bacteria among other methods to forcibly insert or "smuggle" foreign genetic material into a plant or animal. Genetic engineers also use genetic elements such as viruses which "turn on" the foreign genes in the new host organism as well as genes for antibiotic resistance that mark which cells have accepted the foreign genetic material.

Conventional breeders are bound by species boundaries that allow them to transfer genetic material only between related or closely related species. By contrast, the very purpose of genetic engineering is to allow scientists to transfer genes from completely unrelated life forms, creating such concoctions as corn that exudes toxins found in soil bacteria or tobacco that glows due to the insertion into its genome or a firefly gene.

Scientists warn that genetic engineers cannot always accurately predict the outcome of their experiments. Many scientists argue that the genetic engineering process is inherently unpredictable and that genetic engineers are operating with incomplete knowledge about how genes interact with each other and with their external environment. While genetic engineers can with some precision locate and isolate a trait or gene to be inserted, they cannot control with any precision where that gene will be inserted into the host plant or how it will interact with other genes in the host plant. The new gene may disrupt the function or regulation of a plant's existing genes.

Field trials and lab research have documented the unpredictable nature of GE plants. In a 1990 study, scientists attempted to suppress the multiple colors of petunia flowers by turning off pigment genes in the plant. Researchers predicted that all the engineered flowers would be the same color. The flowers, however varied in terms of the amount of color in their flowers and in the pattern of color in individual flowers. Some flowers also changed color as the season changed.

The unpredictability of GE crops was further highlighted in 1997, when farmers growing GE cotton reported that the plants had stunted growth, deformed root systems and produced malformed cotton bolls.

IS GE FOOD SAFE?

Despite endless reassurances by biotechnology companies and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) that GE food is safe to eat, several concerns have arisen. Genetic engineering has the potential to introduce new allergens and toxins into food, increase levels of natural toxins, reduce the nutritional quality of food and increase the rate of antibiotic resistance in bacteria. Yet, our experience with GE crops is limited. They have only been growing on a wide scale for five years and, consequently, have only been part of the American diet for the same amount of time. The long-term consequences of a diet of GE food are therefore unknown. To date, not a single peer-reviewed study has been conducted on the long-term consequences for humans of eating a diet of GE food. Moreover, without segregation and labeling protections in place to inform consumers about what they are eating, it will be difficult to pinpoint and monitor whether the presence of GE material in food products is impacting human health.

The lack of long-term safety studies has correctly led the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to not approve Starlink corn for human consumption because of concerns with potential allergens. Unfortunately, this corn was found in Taco Bell taco shells found on our grocery stores. Kraft, the maker of these taco shells, recalled 2.5 million boxes of these contaminated shells.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS ASSOCIATED WITH GE FOOD

Despite claims that GE crops will help the environment, to date, the main focus of biotechnology has been to generate herbicide resistant crops and pest and disease resistant crops—crops that encourage more intensive use of pesticides. The failure of GE to move agriculture in a more sustainable direction is a serious threat to the environment.

Equally serious is the threat of genetic pollution which is potentially irreversible. Studies are revealing that predictions of gene flow, harm to beneficial insects, insect resistance, and the possibility that GE crops could become weeds are already coming true. Early experiments showed that pollen from GE herbicide resistant canola could spread to their wild relatives—radish plants—in nearby fields, highlighting the possibility of new “superweeds.” More recently, a Canadian farmer, who had planted three different GE herbicide-tolerant crops, reported that a canola plant in his field was resistant to the three different herbicides. Cross pollination by GE crops has contaminated organic crops, in one instance forcing an organic tortilla manufacturer to recall 80,000 bags of tortilla chips. The threat of cross pollination has also prevented organic farmers from planting certain crops in some parts of the country.

Numerous studies have shown the potential fallout of transgenic “insect-resistant” crops on the environment. Both lab and field studies have confirmed that pollen from B.t. corn is lethal to monarch butterfly larvae. Swiss entomologists have found that lacewings and lady bugs are negatively impacted when they feed on organisms that have ingested the GE corn. Research undertaken at the New York University shows that contrary to expectation, B.t.

toxins bind to soil particles and can persist in the soil for up to 250 days. These toxins have been shown to harm soil microorganisms that break down organic matter.

Given that half of our cotton crop and nearly one-third of our corn crop are GE “insect resistant” varieties, it is alarming that such studies were not conducted earlier, underscoring the fact that the experiment with GE crops is taking place in farmers’ fields and on consumer plates rather than in controlled, laboratory settings.

Insect resistance to the B.t. toxin poses a serious threat for organic farmers who use the toxin in a natural spray as part of an integrated pest management scheme. A study published in *Science* found that a common pest of cotton was able to build up resistance to insect resistant varieties very quickly. If the toxin is rendered useless, organic farmers will be deprived of an essential tool.

Not content with simply engineering food crops, biotechnology companies are introducing new test tube “products.” GE engineered salmon that are close to commercialization may be able to “outcompete” wild salmon in reproduction and further deplete this endangered species. Genetically engineered trees are also in the product line and may introduce ecological threats to our national forests.

CAN BIOTECH FEED THE WORLD?

There is no question that the nations of the world must take action to stop global hunger. It is a travesty that 800 million people go hungry each day. Biotech proponents argue that genetic engineering is the solution to the problem because it will increase crop yields to feed a growing population. A techno-fix, however, ignores the root causes of hunger.

Hunger persists today despite the fact that increases in food production during the past 35 years have outstripped the world’s population growth by 16 percent. Indeed, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization recently stated that growth in agriculture will continue to outstrip world population growth. The Institute for Food Policy notes that there is no relationship between the prevalence of hunger in a given country and its population. The real causes of hunger are poverty, inequality and lack of access. Too many people are too poor to buy the food that is available (but poorly distributed) or lack the land and resources to grow it themselves.

The much heralded “Green Revolution” was an example of the failure of new technology applied to farming to reduce hunger. Using the technology, developing countries significantly increased crop yields, but they nevertheless failed to eliminate hunger, because they failed to address the root social and economic causes of hunger. Furthermore, the Green Revolution exacerbated poverty and social inequality. It favored larger, wealthier farmers who could afford the new high yielding crop varieties and the chemical fertilizers, pesticides, and irrigation systems that accompanied them. Left behind were poorer farmers unable to afford such inputs. In the meantime, the heavy use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides generated resistant pests and degraded the fertility of the soil, undermining the very basis for future production.

The growing use of patents to “protect” biotechnology innovations also threatens subsistence farmers in the developing world and could exacerbate hunger. Patents have been

taken out on plants, animals, bacteria as well as genes, cells and body parts. Sanctioned and imposed by the global trading system, this “commodification of life” has allowed multinational companies to patent staple crops in developing countries such as yellow beans in Mexico, South Asian basmati rice as well as medicinal herbs, livestock and marine species. Such a predatory system threatens to enable companies to maximize their control over farming processes and the world’s food resources.

Landmark studies are showing that traditional farming methods, including multi-cropping and small scale techniques are proving to be just as effective in producing high yields as conventional farming. Most recently, in one of the largest agricultural experiments ever, thousands of rice farmers in China were able to double the yields of their crops simply by planting a mixture of two different rices—a practice that did not require using chemical treatments or investing any new capital. Clearly, these types of farming methods are suited to local needs and ecosystems. They will protect the environment and increase an affordable food supply. Biotechnology, however, will likely repeat the failure of the Green Revolution’s fertilizers and pesticides. Biotech will not solve the problem of world hunger but may exacerbate it.

HONORING BRUCE S. HASLAM

HON. JOSEPH M. HOFFEL

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 1, 2000

Mr. HOFFEL. Mr. Speaker, today I recognize Lieutenant Bruce S. Haslam, who is retiring after 26 years from the Abington Township Police Department in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania.

Lt. Haslam began his career in law enforcement as a Patrol Officer and moved up the ranks to Detective Lieutenant. He has been involved in many programs throughout his tenure and the community has benefited greatly from his service.

Lt. Haslam developed and implemented one of the first Officer Street Survival programs in the region. He has been involved in the Abington Police D.A.R.E. program from its inception. Today, the D.A.R.E. program is taught in all Abington schools.

Helping victims of domestic violence has been a priority for Lt. Haslam. He coordinated domestic violence issues for the department by working with state and county agencies to combat this abuse.

Lt. Haslam served the larger community as well. He was in active duty in the United States Army and is now a Colonel in the U.S. Army Reserves. He participated in special assignments in Haiti in 1994 and returned to service in Bosnia from 1998–1999.

It is an honor and privilege to recognize Lt. Bruce Haslam as he retires from the Abington Township Police Department. I congratulate him on 26 years of extraordinary service to the people of Abington and the United States of America.