

## **Background**

During the 2005 California legislative session, two attempts were made to pass bills that would prohibit counties, towns and cities from passing any local regulation on seeds (AB 1508 and SB 1056). Both bills are still alive in our current 2006 legislative session, and it is expected that one or both of them will move between April and June 2006. To stay updated see: <http://www.environmentalcommons.org/gmo-tracker.html>

Both bills contain extremely broad and sweeping language giving the state control over local community decisions. The bills do not mention genetically modified crops or foods, but they are clearly meant to strip the rights of voters to introduce local ballot initiatives, or municipal and county ordinances regulating the use of all seeds and plants, including genetically engineered ones. Local legislation regulating genetically engineered organisms can address important gaps in federal and state policy, and safeguard against potential and perceived threats to public health, the environment, and the economy.

## **What You Can Do to Help!**

Both bills are in their respective agriculture committees. We ask that you state your opposition to these preemption bills in letter form! Please see the template below to craft your letter.

Please fax or send your letter including title and organization name to:

Fax: (510) 548-4916

Email: [becky@calgefree.org](mailto:becky@calgefree.org)

Address: 2530 San Pablo Ave., Suite L, Berkeley, CA 94702

The letters will be batched and sent to a lobbyist representing our views. He will hand-carry them to the appropriate people.

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## **Template for Letter**

[PRINT ON ORGANIZATION LETTERHEAD]

[DATE]

The Honorable Barbara Matthews  
Chair, Assembly Agriculture Committee  
1020 N Street, Suite 362  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: SB 1056 and AB 1508 (As Proposed to Be Amended) – OPPOSE**

Dear Assemblymembers:

[ORGANIZATION NAME], [MISSION], strongly opposes SB1056 and AB1508 and we urge your NO vote on the measure.

SB1056 and AB1508 are anti-democratic attacks on the rights of local citizens and local governments to act in a legal manner to protect their interests, which are not otherwise protected by law. The measure is driven by narrow private interests that seek to protect their economic stake by convincing members of the Legislature to strip away the democratic rights of their own constituents.

It has been argued that local legislation results in an unworkable patchwork of laws, but citizens handle various legal patchworks all the time. Regularly, the public adjusts to varying speed limits, building codes, zoning codes, and multiple local resolutions and ordinances pertaining to issues of public health, welfare, and safety. If the end goal is effective state-level regulation, the way to go about it is to initiate a broad based multi-stakeholder discussion, not to strip local rights and disenfranchise the voting public.

We hope the committee will not be distracted by technical debates about the adequacy of federal regulations or the pros and cons of genetically modified organisms. SB1056 and AB1508 are about the democratic rights of citizens and their locally elected governments to act as they see fit within legal means to protect their own public health, environment, and economic interests in the absence of sufficient federal regulations. They address none of the legitimate concerns that have been raised by citizens through county initiatives and ordinances, but instead take away the right of local citizens and governments to address their concerns by legal means.

We/I strongly urge your NO vote on both SB 1056 and AB 1508.

Sincerely,

[ELECTRONIC OR ORIGINAL SIGNATURE, TITLE, ORGANIZATION]