

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.