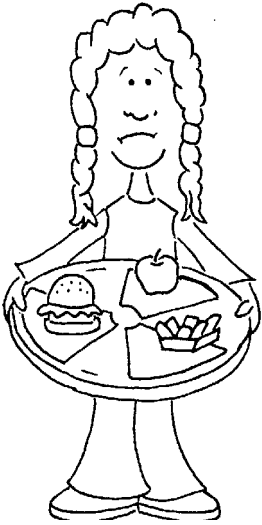


ACTION ALERT

Tell Your Senator To Support AB 1988 – Protect Parents' Right-to-Know What Their Kids Eat In School!



Irradiated ground beef, a questionable product promoted by the meat industry to cover up dirty slaughterhouses, may soon be in your child's lunch! Ignoring intense opposition from concerned parents and the public, the USDA approved irradiated ground beef for the National School Lunch Program in May of 2003. Schools can now choose to serve irradiated foods without a public discussion or parental notification, despite widespread concern about the safety of consuming these foods.

AB 1988 (Hancock) requires school board approval before a school district can serve any irradiated foods, and requires schools that serve irradiated food to notify parents and to label it.

Urge your Senator to Support AB 1988! A sample letter is provided below. To find your Senator, visit www.senate.ca.gov.

Sample Letter

The Honorable _____
California State Senate
P.O. Box 942848
Sacramento, CA 94248

Dear Senator _____:

I am writing to ask you to support Assembly Bill 1988. This bill requires school board approval of the inclusion of irradiated foods in school meal programs, and requires parents to be notified that such foods are being served.

As you know, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) recently lifted the prohibition on the use of irradiated ground beef in the National School Lunch and National School Breakfast Programs, despite intense opposition from the public. Irradiated foods are linked to numerous health problems in humans and animals. The irradiation process depletes essential nutrients in foods. There has been no research on the long-term health effects of consuming irradiated foods, and consumers have overwhelmingly rejected these foods in the marketplace.

While USDA encourages school districts to provide information to parents and students on irradiation, there is no requirement for them to do so. In addition, there are no labeling requirements currently in effect that would distinguish irradiated foods from non-irradiated foods in schools. AB 1988 would correct those problems. This bill would also allow for public input and discussion on the decision to serve irradiated foods in schools by requiring school board approval before these foods can be served.

By passing AB 1988, California can protect parents' right to know what their children are eating in school. I urge you to support AB 1988 and work for its enactment.

Sincerely,
<your name and address>

Please turn over for more info.

Background

What is Irradiation?

Irradiation exposes food to extremely high doses of ionizing radiation in order to kill bacteria. This process destroys essential nutrients and hastens their depletion during storage and cooking. Irradiation also creates known toxins and carcinogens in food, such as benzene and toluene, and a new class of chemicals, called "unique radiolytic products" some of which the FDA has never tested for safety.

Research on irradiated foods has linked them to a wide range of health problems in humans and animals, including reproductive dysfunction, genotoxicity, cytotoxicity, fatal internal bleeding, and, in some cases, cancer. There is no research on the health effects of consuming irradiated foods over a long period of time, and no population has ever consumed irradiated foods as a substantial part of their diet.

Food irradiation also perpetuates the unsanitary environment found in many feedlots and slaughterhouses, where animals wallow in their own filth and are slaughtered at extremely fast linespeeds. Workers in these facilities are often the victims of numerous accidents that result in serious injury or even death. By treating food after it has been processed, irradiation will only allow these conditions to continue and even worsen, increasing the likelihood that meat will be contaminated by excrement and other carriers of dangerous pathogens, and risking the lives of workers.

For more info, visit www.foodirradiation.org

Irradiated Foods in the National School Lunch Program

In May of 2003, the USDA approved irradiated foods for the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), which provides free or reduced price meals to needy schoolchildren. This USDA decision was made despite overwhelming opposition from parents, teachers, students, and concerned citizens who oppose serving irradiated food to children.

For more info, visit www.safelunch.org

Assembly Bill 1988

On February 13, 2004, Assembly Member Loni Hancock introduced Assembly Bill 1988, which requires the following:

- 1) Require school boards to approve irradiated food products before a school can serve them.
- 2) Explain the purpose of the radiation used on foods to parents and pupils and offer information about the effects of radiation on the nutritional value of foods as well as any potential adverse health consequences of irradiated foods.
- 3) Notify parents if a school decides to serve irradiated foods in its meal program.
- 4) Clearly label all irradiated menu items with either, "treated with irradiation," or "treated by irradiation."

To read the bill text, visit www.leginfo.ca.gov



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Please turn over to take action!