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## **SONOMA COUNTY Wording finalized on GMO ballot**

The Sonoma County voter information pamphlet on the controversial genetically modified organisms ballot issue goes to the printer today after Superior Court Judge Allan Hardcastle settled a dispute over wording.

Rival campaign organizations had filed legal challenges to phrases used in ballot arguments, causing a halt to the county's process of mailing ballot information to registered voters. The GE-Free campaign, supported by environmentalists, seeks to impose a 10-year moratorium on genetically altered crops in the county, but many farmers groups are opposed.

Hardcastle sided with proponents of the GMO ban in ruling that opponents can't claim that "every" major farming organization is against it. But he also ruled that proponents can't claim that genetically altered crops are "unsafe."

Settling one major point of contention, Hardcastle decided that Measure M does limit medical treatments that use live genetically engineered organisms but not their use in research. That finding supports GMO opponents who had argued some drugs and vaccines used on people and animals would be curtailed by the ban.

But the judge also sided with GMO proponents critical of the county's fiscal impact statement, saying cleanup costs would vary instead of being likely to bear a \$100,000 price tag.

- Bleys W. Rose