

Senate Joint Resolution No. 42

RESOLUTION CHAPTER 36

Senate Joint Resolution No. 42—Relative to organic food.

[Filed with Secretary of State May 1, 1998.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SJR 42, M. Thompson. Organic food.

This measure would urge President Clinton and the United States Department of Agriculture to redraft regulations proposed by the United States Department of Agriculture concerning organic food to reflect the recommendations of the National Organic Standards Board and ensure compatibility with the California Organic Foods Act of 1990.

WHEREAS, Congress passed the Organic Foods Production Act of 1990 (7 U.S.C.A. Sec. 6501 and following) to establish national standards for organic farming; and

WHEREAS, Congress established the National Organic Standards Board to advise the United States Department of Agriculture in developing regulations to implement the Organic Foods Production Act of 1990; and

WHEREAS, The National Organic Standards Board made specific recommendations concerning the production, processing, labeling, and certification of organic foods, which were drawn largely from California's successful organic standards; and

WHEREAS, The United States Department of Agriculture proposed regulations that differ significantly from those recommended by the National Organic Standards Board; and

WHEREAS, The proposed regulations constitute a significant dilution of the definition of "organic" as established under the California Organic Foods Act of 1990 (Art. 7 (commencing with Section 110810), Ch. 5, Pt. 5, Div. 104, H.& S.C.); and

WHEREAS, California, which produces safe, abundant, traditionally-grown food supplies, in addition to organic food, has had a long tradition of strict guidelines for organic production and a consistent standard of what "organic" means to the consumer; and

WHEREAS, Currently, when consumers buy a product that meets California's stringent organic standards, they know they are purchasing something of high quality; and

WHEREAS, The proposed federal regulations substantially depart from California's approach in that, for example, the final rules may permit the use of municipal sewer sludge, irradiation, and bioengineering in organic production, they may permit the use of



pesticides and other material in organic farming that have not been allowed previously, and they permit excessive confinement of animals, and only 80 percent of the feed for animals must be organic; and

WHEREAS, The proposed federal regulations are far weaker than those established in California and, if adopted, would threaten the integrity of the organic process in our state, undermine established practices of the organic industry, and destroy consumer confidence in the organic label; and

WHEREAS, Organic farmers have successfully developed an economically viable market under the strict California standards; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate and Assembly of the State of California, jointly, That California urges President Clinton and the United States Department of Agriculture to redraft the proposed regulations concerning organic food to reflect the recommendations of the National Organic Standards Board and to ensure compatibility with the California Organic Foods Act of 1990 (Article 7 (commencing with Section 110810) of Chapter 5 of Part 5 of Division 104 of the Health and Safety Code); and be it further

Resolved, That the Secretary of the Senate transmit copies of this resolution to the President of the United States and to the United States Department of Agriculture.

