

GMO Campaign Contribution Case Against GMA Will Proceed

Attorney General of Washington

OLYMPIA — Thurston County Superior Court Judge Christine Schaller today ruled the state's case against the Grocery Manufacturers Association (GMA) could move forward, rejecting the GMA's motion to dismiss the case in its entirety on constitutional grounds.

"Today's ruling is an important step in our work to hold the Grocery Manufacturers Association accountable for the largest campaign finance concealment case in Washington history," Ferguson said. "We intend to send a strong message to all: If you want to engage in political campaigns in Washington, you have to play by the rules."

Ferguson filed a lawsuit against the GMA in October 2013. The state alleged the GMA violated Washington's campaign finance disclosure laws when it solicited and collected roughly \$10.6 million from its members, placed those funds in a special "Defense of Brand" account and used them to oppose Initiative 522, all without disclosing the true source of the contributions.

In January 2014, the GMA filed a counter lawsuit alleging the state had unconstitutionally enforced campaign finance laws against it and requested the judge dismiss the case.

Schaller rejected the motion to dismiss, ruling the state's campaign finance laws requiring the formation of a political committee and associated disclosures were constitutionally applied in this case. The case will now move forward on its merits.

Schaller did, however, find unconstitutional Washington's law requiring the GMA to secure \$10 in donations from 10 separate registered Washington voters as part of its political committee before donating to another political committee.

Ferguson said he was reviewing this part of the ruling with his legal team to determine next steps.

I-522 was an unsuccessful measure before Washington voters in November 2013 that would have required mandatory labeling of genetically engineered foods, seeds and seed products in this state. The GMA was the largest single donor to the No on 522 campaign.

The GMA is a trade association, based in Washington DC, representing more than 300 food, beverage and consumer product companies.
Additional background on the case

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