

To the Editor, *Mount Desert Islander*, Bar Harbor, ME (March 22, 2014)

If you think Congressional leadership does not have your best interests at heart, you might find confirmation in this story.

It has to do with the introduction on March 1 of the Senate version of the notorious anti-GMO-labeling "DARK" Act. The House had already passed a different version last July.

The 90% of Americans who want GMOs labeled do not want the DARK Act. Only Monsanto and Big Food want it. True to form, Majority Leader Mitch McConnell decided to make things as hard as possible for opponents of the bill -- by disguising it as a Trojan Horse.

The vote was scheduled for March 16. The bill's opponents spent those two first weeks of March writing legal briefs and contacting their Senators. And then, on March 14, two days before the vote, the skulduggery started. Not that this doesn't happen often in Congress, but this 1-2-3 punch seems particularly extreme.

First, the bill McConnell introduced was much longer, more complex, and more problematic than the original.

Second, he introduced it as an amendment to the Defund Planned Parenthood Act of 2015. "Amendment," eh? The anti-GMO-labeling language completely replaced the defunding language. The Defund Planned Parenthood Act was now a Trojan Horse -- the DARK Act in disguise. Planned Parenthood was undoubtedly thrilled.

Third -- the highlight of his skulduggery -- was the wording McConnell used for the so-called amendment's introductory clause, the first thing people see when looking at a bill. It stated that the purpose was "to reauthorize and amend the National Sea Grant College Program Act, and for other purposes." Of course, there wasn't a single word in the amendment about the National Sea Grant College Program.

There was a mad scramble to respond, but the word didn't get out to many of the bill's opponents until the night before the vote. Fortunately, both our Senators -- and enough of their colleagues -- voted against allowing discussion on this travesty to go forward, killing it for now. King's office said that they had had over a thousand calls that week, and that they had listened. Please consider thanking them.

But Monsanto & Co. won't be giving up. McConnell's final trick was to switch his vote from "yes" to "no" after the DARK Act lost, which in the strange world of the Senate allows him to bring back an amended version -- and we know what McConnell's amendments are like. So if you're one of those 90% of Americans who want GMO labeling, call your Senators and ask them -- no, tell them: they're your employees -- to support Senator Merkley's mandatory GMO labeling bill, S.2621, and end this skulduggery for good. (King: 202-224-5344, Collins: 202-224-2523). Thanks.

Dick Atlee