

Corporate Political Activities Targeted

October 14, 2013 | Client Update | 2-minute read

Advocates for the disclosure of corporate political contributions stress the value of transparency when pressing companies to provide information on their political activities. More major companies are making this data publicly available, as we reported recently [here](#).

Another consequence, however, is the possibility of being targeted by activists who oppose specific company actions to affect local, state or national legislation. As You Sow, an organization that describes its purpose as building coalitions with socially responsible investors, pension funds, labor groups, foundations and faith-based investors to achieve social and environmental corporate responsibility, has announced that it is filing resolutions asking companies that are opposing state ballot initiatives to require labeling of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) to refrain from using corporate funds to influence those elections.

According to its [website](#), As You Sow has filed resolutions at Monsanto, DuPont and Dow Chemical, and intends to file a shareholder resolution at General Mills and Abbott Laboratories. As You Sow asserts that these companies in the aggregate gave over \$17 million to defeat a labeling initiative in California. It also lists several other companies and planned actions toward those companies. In addition, As You Sow claims that its engagement efforts is responsible for Whole Foods' decision to require mandatory GMO labeling for products sold in its stores.

Green Century Funds, an environmentally responsible investment adviser, indicates on its [site](#) that it is working with As You Sow and others to specifically target companies that gave \$46 million toward the California ballot initiative on GMO labeling, as a similar vote is near in Washington State. The Fund lists a host of brand-name food companies that are in their focus as the top corporate donors who supported the California campaign, as they urge "companies to stay out of elections on controversial public policy issues."

If you have any questions regarding the matters covered in this publication, please reach out to any of the lawyers listed below or your usual Davis Polk contact.

Ning Chiu

+1 212 450 4908

ning.chiu@davispolk.com

This communication, which we believe may be of interest to our clients and friends of the firm, is for general information only. It is not a full analysis of the matters presented and should not be relied upon as legal advice. This may be considered attorney advertising in some jurisdictions. Please refer to the firm's privacy notice for further details.