In The Art of War the famous strategist Sun Tzu writes, "The whole secret lies in confusing the enemy, so that he cannot fathom our real intent."

Sun Tzu could write a whole new chapter about Monsanto and the other pushers of genetically modified foods, or GMO.

On Wednesday, Rep. Mike Pompeo (R-KS) carried Monsanto's torch when he introduced legislation to block GMO labeling.

Over the last two days, Center for Food Safety, along with Environmental Working Group and Just Label It, organized and participated in over 100 meetings on Capitol Hill, with dozens of "good" food corporations and organizations supporting the public's right to know what they are eating, urged House and Senate members to co-sponsor a bill requiring GMO labeling on food products. The bill, known as the Genetically Engineered Food Right-to-Know Act, was first introduced in April 2013 by Senator Barbara Boxer (D-CA) and Rep. Peter DeFazio (D-OR).

The public wants GMO labeling. In fact, a staggering 93 percent of Americans polled say they want foods containing GMO ingredients to be labeled. So why is Monsanto getting its way so far? Because Monsanto and other big chemical and food corporations have spent many tens of millions of dollars to undermine consumers' right to know. Already this year, 32 new GE food labeling bills were introduced in 18 states, with a ballot initiative in Oregon also on target for November 2014.

The "Big 6" chemical companies -- including Monsanto, Syngenta and Dow Chemical -- and the "big food" lobby -- fronted by the Grocery Manufacturers Association (GMA) -- know they are fighting a losing battle, but they have deep pockets and seem to be willing to do, say and spend almost anything to keep American consumers in the dark. Money is no object: the "Big 6" recently dropped nearly half a million dollars to oppose a county-level ballot initiative in Oregon that would protect local farmers from GMO crops.

Nationally, however, in an attempt to completely subsume and redirect the food movement, the GMA found a member of Congress to sponsor their bill to muddy congressional waters and keep consumers in the dark by preventing GMO labeling: Koch-backed Rep. Mike Pompeo. The overall strategy is one that Sun Tzu could be proud of: obfuscation.

"Welcome to Backwards Land," said one Congressional staffer referring to the Pompeo bill.

It is clear what consumers want, so Monsanto and pals are trying to confuse the issue with a Trojan Horse of a bill.

Their talking points have radically changed. These companies now say that they "support a labeling plan," but want labeling to be voluntary. But they know, and consumers should know, that voluntary
rules are the same as no rules. Companies have always been able to label GMOs in their product, but not one has ever volunteered to do so.

Congressman Pompeo's bill is being dubbed the "Denying Americans the Right-to-Know" (DARK) Act -- because it would:

- Preempt states from requiring labeling of genetically engineered food;
- Prevent FDA from requiring GE labeling;
- Codify the current 13-year failed voluntary labeling system;
- Allow "natural" foods to contain GE ingredients; and
- Permit meat, milk, and eggs raised from animals fed GE-feed to be labeled as non-GMO.

As one food industry leader favorable to mandatory labeling told me: "Just like stating whether a sweetener is artificial, or a product contains nuts, labeling requires no change to product ingredients, agricultural practices, or price. All these brands are being held hostage by Monsanto. There is no material benefit to using GMOs in the first place. If they are fearful of labeling for any reason, they would only need to put out the message that in the next five years they were going GMO free and the entire commodity landscape would change, their stocks would likely go up and their toxic liability be vastly reduced."

There are benefits to having a federal labeling standard for U.S. companies too. "The DeFazio bill would provide a framework for labeling consistent with the EU and give producers and manufacturers the opportunity to export our products, providing more jobs and increasing economic growth in the USA," said Christopher Miller of Ben and Jerry's.

Pompeo has claimed, in a letter to his congressional colleagues yesterday, that, "The use of biotechnology increases crop yields and disease resistance while reducing the use of pesticides and water -- helping to keep food affordable for American families."

This is both untrue and irrelevant to labeling.

For starters, the vast majority of genetically engineered crops currently on the market are developed to be resistant to herbicides, meaning we can spray toxic chemicals on the crops and they won't die. This ultimately has caused an increase in the amount of chemicals now sprayed on our farmland -- 526 million more pounds of herbicide in the 16 years after GE crops were introduced (1996-2011).

This massive use of herbicide, mostly Monsanto's Roundup, has triggered an epidemic of weed resistance. Nearly half of all U.S. farmers surveyed reported Roundup-resistant weeds on their farm in 2012, up from 34 percent in 2011.

As for feeding the world, GE crops are largely soy, corn, canola and sugarbeets -- not crops that feed the world, but rather ones that feed cars or livestock. In addition, GE crops have failed to increase yield, with the biggest gains in yield coming from conventional breeding, not genetic engineering.
These are just some of the reasons why consumers are adamant to find out where their food comes from and what's in it, demanding GMO labeling. Tired and false claims about GMOs saving the world are not a sufficient reason to deny citizens their right to know. Yet the front group supporting the bill, the so-called "Coalition for Safe and Affordable Food," aims to deflect the conversation by trotting out these falsehood as reasons to oppose mandatory labeling. Disreputable and deceitful.

Those who care need to do their part. Don't be fooled by Monsanto and GMA's "Keep Americans in the Dark" Act! This is a Koch-fueled fantasy that steals attention away from those who battle for transparency in labeling, who are gaining victories every day. In fact, just recently, Connecticut and Maine have both passed GMO labeling laws and Alaska has passed a law requiring the labeling of genetically engineered fish.

GMO labeling is not a matter of if, but when. Together we can make it happen.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/elizabeth-kucinich/gmo-labeling_b_5120692.html