

HOUSE BILL 1487

Good Morning Chairman Johnson & Members of the House Agriculture Committee,

For the record, my name is Kerry Dockter, I am a beef producer from central North Dakota and I am currently President of the Independent Beef Association of North Dakota.

I am here today to testify in support of HB 1487. I feel the question here today is whether this committee is with the changing of one word in this bill, from MUST to MAY.

When looking back to the testimony presented in 2015 on HB 1238 to allow the increase in the checkoff, I feel we who were opposed were misled. It was highly suggested by the House Committee Members that this increase in money was meant to help North Dakota producers. We were told there was a miscommunication between Beef Checkoff people & producers. The Beef Commission was warned "Do Not Lose Control of the Money, you will not be looked upon fondly amongst the legislature if this money goes to the National Board." Also, it was stated in testimony by a member of the Ag Committee "Make sure the dollars stay local & that it is impacting research in our State & marketing our products."

To be very honest, I-BAND opposed the 1238 bill in 2015 because of fear that our hard earned dollars paid by our producers would not stay in our state & would go to the NCBA, which is exactly what has happened. In my opinion I don't believe NCBA can truthfully and honestly represent the Beef Industry of our State, "mainly cow-calf producers and feeders" and the Meat Industry "the Packers" at the same time.

So looking back from 2015 until now:

1. We have lost M-Cool in which NCBA was a strong opponent & this removed our ability to label our US born, raised & processed beef. Why would we want to send our dollars to such an association?
2. Our markets have declined easily by 50% of what they were in 2015 so how did the second dollar for the checkoff help our beef industry?
3. We have seen a decline in producers from 10,000 in 2015 to less than 8,500 in our state currently.
4. We have also seen a rapid decline in per capita consumption of beef.
5. Our latest dietary guidelines are promoting more macaroni, refined grains, less dairy products & red meat, poultry & eggs all lumped together as a source of protein with beef losing its identity.

6. More & more producers are coming forward and voicing their concerns as to what our checkoff dollar is really doing for them.

Solutions:

1. Make this second dollar voluntary.
2. Keep as much of ALL of the checkoff dollars allowed locally and in state to fund;
 - a. Research
 - b. Give financial support to building in-state beef processing facilities to add value & promote North Dakota born, raised & processed beef.
 - c. Provide our excellent product to schools to exceed their dietary guidelines.
 - d. Provide a product that our consumers are asking for that is identifiable, wholesome & nutritious.
3. Add value to beef much like corn has done with ethanol & soybeans with biofuels.
4. Invest our checkoff dollars in state so we can develop common ground between organizations like I-Band, NDSA, NDFU, NDFB, Dairy Industry and Feeder Industry to improve our Beef Industry in our state.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 1487.

Any questions.