



North Dakota House of Representatives

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Chairman and members of the committee,

My name is Cole Christensen, Representative from District 24. I am here to testify in support of HB 1361.

The question that prompted this bill: What is a person?

I was reading an article from the World Economic Forum with the headline of "What if nature became a legal person?" One of the sections in this article states: **The ascent – from legal object to legal person** "The Law defines a **legal person** as a human or **non-human** entity that has the legal rights and is subject to obligations. Moreover, a **legal person** may sue and be sued under its own name. Nowadays, all human beings are considered as **legal persons**." The ending quote of this article, is from de Toledo: 'Making natural entities **legal actors....would eventually retransfer rights, powers, and even financial levels to those from which the rights of humans** derive, namely the **Earth itself** and all its **non-human components**.' I looked into this further and found multiple examples of rivers that have been granted "personhood" status. I included the link in your email.

I also found an article on Artificial intelligence. Looking into this, page 10 says: 'AI's work "is indeed inventive, then both treating computational inventions as patentable and recognizing [AI] as an inventor would be consistent with the constitutional rationale for patent protection" But to do so would require the recognition of AI as a **legal entity** or a **legal person**, which is not available under current US law. Nevertheless, the general definition of a "**legal person**," which is "a subject of **legal rights and obligations**" is likely broad enough to encompass AI as long as AI's role as an inventor is subject to **legal rights and obligations**. **Legal personhood** and inventorship status are thus theoretically possible for AI **if the legislature is willing to grant them..**'

That brings me to a bill we have this session. SB 2041 subsection 8 that states:

Person; "Means an individual, estate, business or nonprofit entity, public corporation, government or government subdivision, agency, or instrumentality, or other legal entity." I believe this will be used to re-define what a person not just in this section, but in all of century code.

1361 is aimed to define personhood, and to retain its exclusive rights to **human beings**. I understand there are certain rights granted to government agencies and corporations that are also granted to human beings. If the committee wishes to review this and amend those out, I'm okay with that. However, I do believe this assembly needs to make that important distinction in the future, and give different definitions for non human beings.

I don't believe the rights of a human beings are equal or inferior to spiders, rocks, or artificial intelligence. This will become a big topic in the coming years, and I believe it is our duty for next generation to reserve personhood to human beings only. I mentioned a couple examples and emailed several links to articles that raise the concerns that this bill would address. I will stand for any questions and encourage a do-pass recommendation.