

Good afternoon to all here.

I will freely admit that I don't have a great deal of passion on lab-grown meat itself, but I am troubled by the direction of debate around the issue and the approach this legislation presents.

Seven years ago, my wife and I braved mountainous winter highways to move from Washington State to North Dakota. Among our reasons for making this move was the accelerating slide of Washington into rampant paternalism, in which the state believed that no citizen would be safe and no business could succeed without someone looking over their shoulder. We were glad to find in North Dakota a place that still held the frontier spirit of self-government and self-responsibility dear.

Thus, I and freedom-loving citizens, whatever our thoughts on something which will potentially be banned, should be wary when a ban is proposed. Our default position should be to permit a thing until it has been thoroughly demonstrated to present an intolerable evil. Neither this legislation nor testimony in favor has met this test.

The most serious charge is that labs use rapid growth technology, and cancer is a rapid growth process, so there may be a link. That's simply not how biology works, however: similar outcomes do not imply similar essence. Shall we say that warm milk may poison the heart and lungs, since cigarettes are also relaxing? Whatever actual health risk may actually exist is speculation, and we should be wary of purely speculative bans. This one ban may mean little, but the spirit of ultra-precautionary paternalism, in which citizens are presumed unable to handle new things without the strict guidance of the state, poisons innovation and entrepreneurship, the keys to our future.

This legislation also treat our ranchers as helpless children. I agree that North Dakota beef from North Dakota ranchers is the best there is – which is precisely why I don't think the anti-competitive spirit of this bill is appropriate. If you, like me, don't expect to see a day when lab-grown beef matches the quality and affordability of homegrown beef, then why leap to the iron fist of the state?

Perhaps the fear is that some consumers will prefer the lab-grown meat over some trendy but misguided notions. Fine, that will probably occur – but that's a matter of personal choice that we should respect. I'd be shocked if we see much of it here, but even supposing North Dakotans flocked to lab-grown meat like so many Californians, that ought to be their right as free men and women – the state ought not dictate culinary preferences, even to the misguided.

Frankly, some of the other fears are likewise misguided. Some seem to think that our consumers will be forced to pay more for meat or taxpayers will have to subsidize lab-grown meat; nonsense! Affordable natural beef will be right there, the affordability gap plain as day, and if the lab-grown meat industry fails in a free market, good, that proves that consumers have their head on straight – and it would be a hot day in January when North Dakota subsidizes such a failure.

Finally, as a person of faith, let me address a common complaint: that God gave us perfectly good meat. Yes, He did – and then through countless generations of applying the intellect He gave us through artificial techniques, we have done great things with the garden entrusted to us. If lab-grown meat actually somehow becomes a success, that will glorify God and His mighty works, not detract.

North Dakotans should be wary of government paternalism and demand a high bar for bans, regardless of how minor. I am not a big fan of the subject of this bill, but this ban does not clear that bar. I encourage you all to oppose it and the philosophy it represents.

Respectfully,

James Inwood of Bismarck