

HB 1207

House Agriculture Committee

Room 327C

Jan. 17, 2025

Members of the House Ag Committee:

Good morning, Chairman Beltz and members of the House Agriculture Committee.

My name is Kevin Hansen. I am a Ryder, ND., cow-calf producer and backgrounding feedlot owner. Along with hosting an annual production sale at Kist Livestock in February.

House bill 1207 is making a change from seating beef commission board members from an appointed position to an elected position. My thought process is that moving to an elected position would not improve the quality of the nominated people for the position nor give more opportunity to those wishing to serve.

I have questions about HB 1207 that have been going through my head. 1) Will it change how the Beef Commission board is seated, and will it change the effectiveness of the Beef Commission board? 2) Is the process in place of finding the right people for the position? 3) How do we make known when positions are up? I think if we ask these basic questions to ourselves the solution has been in front of us all along.

I will start with the 1st and 2nd question I proposed the Beef Commission currently is seated through a process. Candidates are brought forward from different segments of the beef industry. They are three beef producers, one cattle feeder, one dairy producer, one public livestock market representative, and three at large representatives. These candidates are nominated by different organizations across North Dakota for the position on the board. The current process vents each producer nominated and cultivates the active beef producers in each area to find the best candidates for those with terms expiring.

The 3rd question I have is how to notify potential candidates of the open board position and a timeline to work with to nominate your candidate. I believe this has been a shortcoming of the current law on the books. I have addressed this issue at the end of my letter and look forward to you hearing my proposal.

The election process has many short coming for this process of seating board members on the Beef Commission. The candidates coming forward to be nominated are not plentiful people are not knocking on the door to serve. We have an industry that is time and labor restricted making it difficult to find candidates that will run in an election and later serve on that board. That is why I say we cultivate to find the best candidates for the position. It takes time and effort with each organization to find those individuals that do have the time and can put forth the effort to serve the beef industry. Along with that we need people serving that are levelheaded, money conscious, able to serve alongside other board members, and have a knowledge of how our industry works. We find those individuals through the process in place submitting those names in front of the governor's office for his final approval. We also have an issue with election attendance with the time constraints on beef producers' elections will be poorly attended. As we see with the school board and other elections people just don't turn out to represent themselves and this is sad, but this is what we are faced with. So, as I have stated before, we have a system in place that works for the North Dakota beef industry why try to fix something that is not broke!!

The other issue is the cost of an election. The cost will all come back to the producer who pays into the Beef Check Off. Those dollars collected are to be spent on education, research, and promotion of our beef products. Allocating those dollars to run a costly election process is a direct violation to the producers of North Dakota. If we had a problem with the existing process of finding qualified candidates, then yes, we need a change but that is not the issue with our current process.

I will direct your attention to a former bill brought forth in the Sixty-eight Legislative Assembly HB 1275. It had much more significant detail on how to notify people of expiring terms and what it would take to be a qualifying candidate should you choose to say put your name in the hat. The past HB 1275 points out some of the shortcomings of how to notify beef producers. I feel this bill has more merit than going to election because it preserves the process in place that is working very well. But ads the benefit of notifying the beef producers wishing to serve and puts a timetable in place to make each organization aware of those timelines.

My honest opinion is that you vote no on HB 1207. And bring back HB 1275, which I referenced earlier as a better solution to improve notification and what the qualifications are to serve on the board.

Thank you for the opportunity to address you Mr. Chairman and House Ag Committee members. I look forward to working with you on this issue.

Sincerely,

Kevin Hansen