

Chairman: Johnson

Members of the Ag Committee

I am Ann Bernhardt from District 28. I am a farm wife and work part time for the Department of Human Services. My husband Kevin is at home feeding the cattle, Kevin and I are in favor of Bill 1487.

Currently there is a fund raising campaign going on in which state employees can pledge a monthly donation of any amount through payroll deductions. I'm not sure if our state legislators participate in this fundraiser but I'm going to use this example for the story I will tell today. I will use the fictitious name of "Feed The People."

One day the director from the "Feed The People" Organization went to the Office of Management and Budget at the state capitol and requested that \$200 be deducted from each senator and representative's paycheck each month. When the secretary asked why this was being done the director said, "It's a good program, and the majority of our legislators are in support of it."

So the first of the month after paychecks were deposited a few of the legislators noticed that \$200 was deducted from their check. Ollie who was a fiscally responsible representative wanted to know "Why?" So off to the HR department he headed. Ollie inquired why \$200 was deducted without his approval. Office staff told him that all the legislators were in favor of this program because "Feed The People" was good for our community. Ollie said, "I'm not saying they do good or do bad, I'm only saying I don't want to donate!" After a bit of arguing the receptionist said, "You have the right to get your money back." Ollie said, "Ok, give it to me." The receptionist responded with, "It's not something I can do, you will need to contact "Feed The People" directly. So after session that day Ollie stopped by the "Feed The People" office but there was nobody available to help him. A few days later Ollie decided to call "Feed The People," again nobody was available so he left a message. A few weeks passed and Ollie still had not heard back from "Feed The People. Ollie was busy with the 67th legislative session so he asked his wife Lena to call for him. When Lena called "Feed The People" she was asked if her name was on his paycheck and Lena replied with, "No it isn't" the receptionist responded with, " Then I'm sorry, but I won't be able to help you today, Ollie will have to contact us himself." When Ollie returned home on Friday Lena informed him that he must call himself.

When Ollie called Monday morning he was disappointed when the receptionist told him, "I'm sorry, you missed the deadline, you had to request the refund within 10 days of getting paid. Ollie hung up very frustrated.

In March when Ollie called for his refund he was asked several insulting questions as to why he wouldn't participate. For the next 10 months Ollie went through the very frustrating process of requesting the form, returning the completed form with a copy of his paystub and then patiently waiting for his \$200 refund hoping he had done everything correctly.

Ollie being a member of the House of Representatives decided a bill was needed to protect all individuals from organizations that unfairly pushed bills through legislation for their own personal gain without a vote by the people the new bill would affect.

There are a few key points to my story.

#1) Ollie was never given a voice before the decision was made to withhold money from his pay check.

#2) Ollie had to jump through hoops each month to get his refund.

#3) Ollie worked hard for his paycheck and nobody should be able to spend his money without going through the proper channels.

I hope my little story today has put the cattle producer's situation into perspective for you.

Shortly you will be hearing testimony from the opposition of bill 1487. Who are these people opposing the bill?

Are they cattle producers who drag their calves through the snow and mud?

Are they Producers who get up 3 times a night to check cows who are in labor?

Are they producers who watch the livestock sales for weeks hoping to hit a good market?

OR – are they employees and spouses of the Stockmans Association who depend on their paychecks, directors who travel on our check off dollar and eat fancy meals at the producers expense.

I can honestly say that I have not talked to one producer who is in favor of the check off dollar.

I ask that you keep in mind my little story when you make your decision this afternoon.

Thanks for your consideration.

Ann & Kevin Bernhardt

1860 73rd St SE

Linton ND 58552