

# BOB KULP

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 69<sup>TH</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

November 6, 2019  
Assembly Committee on Agriculture  
Rep. Bob Kulp Testimony in favor of AB 572

Chairman Tauchen and members of the committee,

2017 Wisconsin Act 8 established cheese as our state's dairy product. Wisconsin is the number 1 cheese-producing state in the United States, making 26% of our country's cheese. According to the Wisconsin Milk Marketing Board, in 2014 Wisconsin cheesemakers used about 90% of Wisconsin's milk supply to produce 2.9 billion pounds of cheese each year.

Colby cheese was developed in 1885 by Joseph Steinward of Colby WI. The cheese is named for the village that it originated which is located in the 69<sup>th</sup> Assembly District that I represent. Colby cheese has similarities and differences with cheddar cheese. While the cheese has a similar taste and color to cheddar, it does not go through the normal cheddaring process. Washing the curd and replacing whey with water in the cooking process allow the finished cheese to be softer, moister and more likely to melt than normal cheddar cheese.

Wisconsin is known for its cheese globally and it plays a significant factor for our economy, cultural, and state identity. Of all cheeses, it is Colby cheese that helped transform Wisconsin into America's Dairyland. This cheese is so popular that it has inspired cheese makers across the country to manufacture 79 percent of all sold Colby cheese to meet popular demand. Colby cheese is a unique Wisconsin original and is deserving of special recognition. I recommend the members of this committee to vote in favor of adapting Colby cheese as Wisconsin's official cheese.

Thank you.

Bob Kulp  
69<sup>th</sup> District  
State Representative

REPRESENTING WISCONSIN'S 69<sup>TH</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

**STATE SENATOR KATHY BERNIER**  
TWENTY-THIRD SENATE DISTRICT



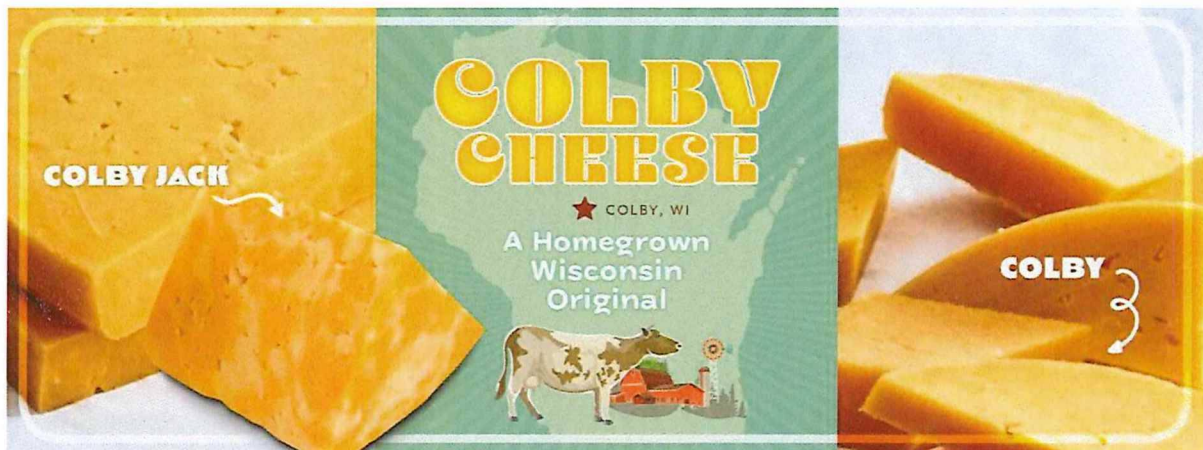
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**From: Senator Kathy Bernier**  
**To: Assembly Committee on Agriculture**  
**Re: Testimony on Assembly Bill 572**  
**Relating to: designating Colby as the state cheese**  
**Date: Wednesday, November 6, 2019**

Thank you Chairman Tauchen for allowing me to testify on Assembly Bill 572, which would designate Colby Cheese as Wisconsin's state cheese. Wisconsin does cheese better than anybody else and Colby Cheese is the Wisconsin original that helped transform our state into America's Dairyland.

Nearly 150 years ago, long before Wisconsin became famous for dairy, Colby Cheese was a farm family recipe dreamed up right here in Wisconsin. This amazing cheese quickly grew into a regional favorite and, propelled by its mild, creamy flavor and moist, meltable goodness, went on to become one of the most popular and best-selling cheeses in America. In fact, although 60 Wisconsin cheesemakers produce 21% of the nation's Colby Cheese, this homegrown Wisconsin original has become so popular that cheesemakers across the country are required to produce the other 79% to meet the demand.

Colby cheese is truly an all-American, Wisconsin original, and it's prominence across the country and around the world is something we can all be proud of. I ask that you please vote for Assembly Bill 572 and join me in honoring Colby cheese as a giant step forward for America's Dairyland.



## COLBY CHEESE FACTS

Invented in and named for Colby, Wisconsin - Colby Cheese started as a family recipe nearly 150 years ago and has grown to be one of America's most popular and best-selling cheeses.

- ❖ **An All-American Original:** One of the first truly American cheeses, Colby was developed by an American in the United States and was not intended to be an imitation of any European cheese.
- ❖ **Wisconsin-Born:** Invented in 1885 and named for the farm community in Clark and Marathon counties where it was first created, Colby Cheese has gone from a farm family recipe to a top-selling American cheese!
- ❖ **Big Business:** Although 60 Wisconsin cheesemakers produce 21% of the nation's Colby Cheese, this homegrown Wisconsin cheese has become so popular that cheesemakers across the country have to produce the other 79% to meet the demand!
- ❖ **Strategic Asset:** Colby is one of just a handful of cheeses that national cheese movers and shakers deem a strategic cheese for expanding into overseas markets. As such, it's one of just four cheeses eligible for federal export subsidies.
- ❖ **The Cheesehead Cheese:** With its bright orange-yellow color and small holes known as "eyes", Colby cheese is the cheese that most resembles the iconic Cheesehead hats that define Wisconsin sports fans.
- ❖ **Pairs Well With Others:** Served in slices or cubes, Colby's light flavor makes it a great table cheese. It pairs well with rye bread, apples or pears, as it's creamy, light flavor complements acidic foods. Colby is perfect for a grilled cheese sandwich, especially if you are including other ingredients that you don't want to overpower. But where Colby really shines is as a great snack for kids who might not like the sharp flavor of other cheeses.
- ❖ **Party Trick:** How to tell Cheddar from Colby? If your refined cheese palate fails you, look for the holes. Colby has small holes cheese people call "eyes".

***“Colby Cheese” from the original production “Coming Home, Coming Home to Colby”***  
**Performed by Colby High School’s Colby Choir Coalition**

“Let me tell you about this city we call colby, population 1852, plus a few!  
We’ve got farmers, country breeze, on north highway 13, and more than just a county we’re in two.”  
It’s a place where people always greet each other, neighbors, family, friends, and in between  
We’ve got show choir and stage lights, football friday nights.  
But there’s one thing we hold tried and true, ‘cheese!’  
A long time ago, more than a hundred ‘years!’  
A man built a factory for cheese  
In 1885 his son would tow the line, and make the US native recipe  
Colby was the name of the creation, a process that was different than the rest.  
A mile west and south, you put it in your mouth, a brand new kind of cheese he put to test  
Colby, Colby cheese, no matter how you slice it you’ll be pleased  
You can cut it you can curd it, you can even melt and slurp it  
And maybe you can save a chunk for me  
Colby, Colby cheese, giving thanks to cows on bended knee  
It starts out just like cheddar, but then we make it better  
Thank to Joe Steinwand hail to thee  
First you warm the milk  
“And add the rennet”  
Then you cut the mixture  
“Into squares”  
Heating up the curd  
“The whey is gone for good”  
Wash and cool the piece  
“In cold water”  
Slate and mix the curd  
“And press it after”  
then it sits a month  
“Or two or three”  
“Now the finished product gets packed sold and bought up and we eat it often at events  
Like ‘Cheese Days!’”  
Colby, Colby cheese, no matter how you slice it you’ll be pleased  
You can cut it you can curd it, you can even melt and slurp it  
And maybe you can save a chunk for me  
Colby, Colby cheese, giving thanks to cows on bended knee  
It starts out just like cheddar, but then we make it better  
Thank to Joe Steinwand hail to thee, hail to thee  
So now you’ve heard about the city we call Colby  
And our pride and joy the Colby cheese  
Come again now don’t be shy taste the cheese come on now try  
And find out why oh why  
We love cheese, Colby cheese, we love cheese, ‘Colby cheese’

## Colby Cheese for State Cheese

John E. Kinville  
7374 203rd Street  
Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin 54729  
68th Assembly District  
23rd State Senate District

My name is John Kinville and I am an American Government teacher at Chippewa Falls Senior High School in the Northwestern portion of Wisconsin. One of the ways our school connects students to our government is through a "Letter to a Lawmaker" activity. One of my students, Beau Sweitzer, proposed in his letter that the State Legislature consider Colby Cheese as our state's official cheese. I know what you are thinking: Why not tasty cheddar or even the pungent Limberger? For starters, cheddar comes from England while Limberger's stench can be traced back to its origins in Belgium. Colby, meanwhile, is 100% from Colby, Wisconsin (in Clark County)...born, raised, and perfected.

But, Colby isn't just an ordinary cheese. It was the invention of an innovative cheese maker named Joseph Steinwand in 1885. Rather than allowing the curds to undergo the normal cheddaring process, Steinwand utilized a cold-water washing process that reduced the acid content while preserving more whey within the cheese. The result was a mild, creamy, and tasty high-moisture cheese that was named for the township in which it was invented...Colby, Wisconsin.

Today, Colby Cheese is near-universally appreciated and admired by residents throughout Wisconsin. From Superior to Beloit, Hudson to Green Bay, or even Republican and Democrat, Colby unites us all. Colby's mildness offends no one, while its tastiness leaves no one behind. While some might say "why not pepperjack?," or "why isn't gouda good enough?". Colby is 100% Wisconsin...born raised, and perfected, and its name coincides with a location found on the official Wisconsin Highway Map.

If you are concerned that this designation might stir a debate amongst cheese enthusiasts around the state, I encourage you to move forward boldly. As we discuss, debate, and expand our taste-testing of legendary Wisconsin cheeses it will be the farmers of Wisconsin that will reap the benefits. Designating Colby Cheese as our official state cheese will acknowledge our state's history, pay homage to our state's "cheesehead" culture, and expand economic opportunities for our state's dairy farmers. Thank you for this incredible opportunity today, and thank you for your service to our great state.

# Colby Cheese 2019 Assembly Bill 572

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Beau Sweitzer

University of Wisconsin Eau-Claire

November 6<sup>th</sup>, 2019

As you know, Wisconsin already has many state symbols such as milk as the State Beverage, the badger as the State Animal, muskellunge as the State Fish and Robin as the State Bird. These state symbols indicate a sense of culture, and pride for all Wisconsinites. Similar to the aforementioned items, cheese is a large part of Wisconsin culture. After all, Wisconsin is the nation's leader in cheese production supplying approximately 3.42 billion pounds in 2017[1]. The significance of cheese in Wisconsin is recognized nationwide as many refer to Wisconsinites as “cheeseheads” (a reference to supporters of the great Green Bay Packers). So if the nation recognizes this significance, we (as Wisconsinites) should also be sure to acknowledge the role of a specialty cheese in our state.

INTRODUCE COLBY (EXPLAIN WHAT IT IS).

Colby cheese provides much to Wisconsin that can be seen by citizens of the state. Colby was invented in Wisconsin in 1885 by Joseph F. Steinwand. Wisconsin produces approximately 21% of the nations Colby cheese. Colby cheese was named after the city, Colby in the state of Wisconsin. Colby cheese is special to Wisconsin because it was invented here. Wisconsinites are very loyal to our home

state and Colby being recognized at the State Cheese of Wisconsin would allow Wisconsinites to feel the sense of culture that other State Symbols provide.

Colby is made by a number of different companies in Wisconsin[2], there are currently 36 different companies that produce Colby cheese. Recognizing Colby as the State Cheese

would likely increase sales for these companies, and possibly encourage others to enter the market. This is especially important as family farms in Wisconsin struggle to compete with factory farms. The increased sales resulting from nominating Colby as Wisconsin's State Cheese may help increase demand for products needed to produce the cheese.

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[1] "Top U.S. States Cheese Production 2017." *Statista*,  
<https://www.statista.com/statistics/195764/top-10-us-states-for-cheese-production-2008/>.

[2] Staff, Wisconsin Cheese. "Our Makers." *Wisconsin Cheese*, 10 Sept. 2019,  
<https://www.wisconsincheese.com/our-cheese/our-makers?cheese=15>.

# Testimony of Matthew Oehmichen

Community leader, media personality, business leader, agriculturalist

Of Colby, Wisconsin

## On The Issue of Making Colby Cheese The Official State Cheese of Wisconsin

Assembly Agriculture Committee

Room 413N, State Capitol

Public Hearing concerning Bill 572

Good day to you all, and thank you for having me here.

My name is Matthew Oehmichen, of Colby Wisconsin.

Bill 572 is legislation to make Colby the official state cheese. But that bewilders me, because how's Colby Cheese not already the state cheese? This isn't right, and I am here to tell you why we need to get this settled.

Let me break it down for you.

Wisconsin is known as America's Dairyland, and for good reason- our number-one output of all dairy products is cheese. Furthermore, our state is the nation's top producer of cheese, not just currently, but since 1910. Our cheese is world class. No one makes it better than Wisconsin. That's probably why the nation calls us cheese-heads, right?

There are 4 cities and towns in Wisconsin that have a cheese theme or nickname, but there is only one that bears the name of an actual cheese, and that is the city and town of Colby.

But what makes Colby Cheese so special? Colby is Wisconsin's only native cheese: that's right, it's our own original recipe. All the other cheeses we produce so well, and so much of, were someone else's idea.

Colby is the only cheese that Wisconsin came up with on its own, and it was from my little hometown. Joseph F. Steinwand, back in the late 1890s, came up with the cheese. He wanted to have the robust flavor like cheddar but without the dry texture of cheddar, and that's what he made: a cheese that was soft, moist, and flavorful. And that is what made Colby cheese so popular. Like what we say back up in Colby; it's *better-than-cheddar*.

A little over a mile north of our family farm is where Steinwand established the Colby Cheese Factory, which operated for decades, up until the 1990s. My dad, the town chairman of Colby, still remembers being 15 years old in 1968, lifting and loading milk after chores into a pick up truck and hauling it up to the Cheese Factory. On the corner of Hi Line and Colby Cheese Factory Road is the hallowed ground of Wisconsin dairy history, and in downtown Colby a state historical marker immortalizes the story of how Colby changed the cheese game.

You can't get any more 'Wisconsin' than Colby cheese.

The best state, deserves the best representation- an original representation. So many official state items are often duplicated, and have no originality. For instance, did you know the American Robin is shared by three states including Wisconsin? This is an opportunity to have an icon, a symbol that no other state will ever have.

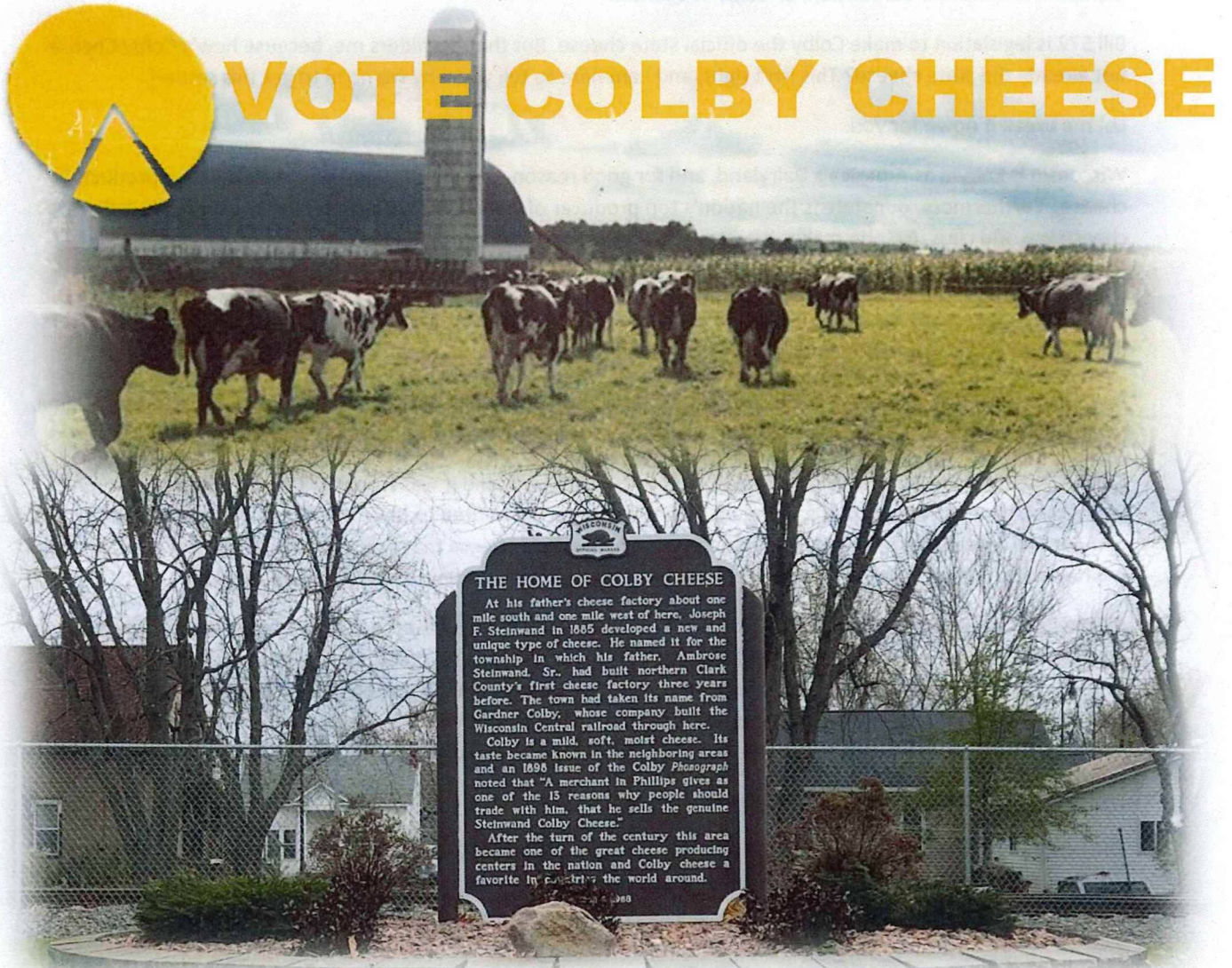


If I come off passionate over something seemingly small in importance, such as cheese, it's because of my enduring love of and pride for my hometown and of our beloved state.

Colby cheese is more than just cheese, it is a representation of all that is best about being a Wisconsinite. The cheese came from a small community, just like those that dot the state's landscape, from border to border, a community that was built by the calloused hands and strong backs of dairy farmers, and built by those who dared to dream bigger than their city borders. That's what this is all about. With this bill you are building an identity, solidifying our culture and heritage of being America's Dairyland, and recognizing those who move *forward*, like our state motto. This is about having pride in our Wisconsin. Having state pride develops great citizens, leaders, and businesses. People can be proud of this great state that shaped who they are.

Please take action and declare Colby cheese as an official state symbol that is 100% authentic Wisconsin- for our farmers, leaders, communities, and future generations.

Thank you so much for taking the time to hear my testimony, God bless Wisconsin, and I will be happy to take any questions at this time.



**Testimony in favor of 2019 Assembly Bill 572  
Assembly Committee on Agriculture**

**November 6, 2019**

Chairman Tauchen and Members:

My name is Ann Luckey. My great-grandfather, Joseph Steinwand, invented Colby Cheese in Colby, Wisconsin, in 1885. My mother Betty, who passed away a few weeks ago, was Joseph's oldest granddaughter.

It's hard to put into words what Colby Cheese means to me. As a family we'd make regular trips to Colby, my mother's hometown. Seeing the historical marker, and pictures of it, did not make much of an impact on me as a young girl. Now, however, when I realize the significance of that, I am overwhelmed. Our family is a part of the history of Wisconsin. Simply put, "America's Dairyland" would not be "America's Dairyland" as we know it were it not for Joseph Steinwand and his Colby Cheese.

Grandpa and Grandma Steinwand, Joseph's son and daughter-in-law, were humble people and never put on airs. The Steinwands were pillars of the Colby community, known for their kindness and congeniality. We have my mom to thank for putting in all the effort and time into recording the history of the family. We are lucky, too, that my brother Joe has recorded my mom telling some of these memories in her own voice. Mom always looked forward to getting cheese whenever someone came back home from Colby, even at the ripe old age of 99!

My brother Steve has a cabin in Medford and his wife Tami always remarked how our regular trips up there really come full circle for our family. I see all the towns that we heard about when we were younger. My brother Dave and his wife make the drive to go to Colby Cheese Days when they can, they got engaged in Colby, they take care of the graves at the cemetery. And, when we're driving up there, it's breathtaking to realize that whenever anyone in the world eats Colby cheese they are consuming a product that a simple, humble, hard-working Wisconsinite created. We should lay claim to this fact as soon as possible. What a boost of pride that will give everyone in Colby! They, and its product, represent the character of the Midwest.

I remember visiting my son in Madison and going to the Farmer's Market on a Saturday, stopping by the booth for Hook's Cheese in Mineral Point. There I talked with Julie Hook who was, and still is, the *only* woman to win the World Cheese Championship. She won that award in 1982, for their Colby.

The following year, 1983, was proclaimed by Governor Dreyfus to be "Colby Cheese Centennial Year." He recognized then, as many recognize now, that Colby cheese has affected our state's proud status as cheesemakers in a way no other single thing has done.

I take pride in my family's history, but I know this is not just about my family. It's not even just about the cheese. It's about the recognition of a hardworking farmer, a Wisconsinite through-and-through, who created a good product and it has since become a national symbol of good food – something we can all take pride in.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Ann Luckey  
Cedarburg, Wisconsin