



From: Senator Kathy Bernier
**To: Senate Committee on Government Operations, Legal Review and
consumer Protection**
Re: Testimony on Senate Bill 371
Relating to: designating Colby as the state cheese
Date: Tuesday, January 18th

Thank you Chairman Stroebel for allowing me to testify on Senate Bill 371, which would designate Colby as Wisconsin's official state cheese and include it among our state symbols. Wisconsin does cheese better than anybody else and Colby is the Wisconsin original that helped transform our state into America's Dairyland.

Long before we became America's Dairyland – nearly 140 years ago - Colby began as a farm family recipe - dreamed up by a young man on the floor of his father's small, wooden cheese factory.

Named for the nearby town of Colby – it went from a farm family recipe to world famous in just a few generations and today is one of America's best-selling cheeses.

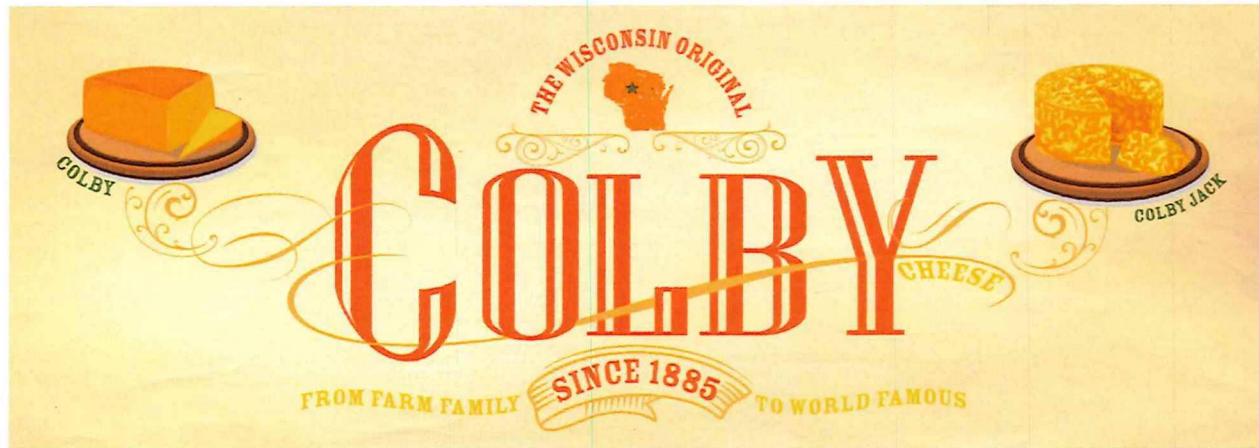
The secret to its success was the invention of the cold-water wash, one of just a handful of natural cheesemaking processes native to the United States. This inventive process and the Colby it produced, put Wisconsin on the cheesemaking map. It revolutionized cheesemaking by cutting down on the sharp flavors and crumbly textures of some semi-hard cheeses (like cheddar), and instead produced a much more mild, creamy, and meltable cheese.

Today, Colby's inventive cold-water wash still has an enormous impact on cheese worldwide. It widely used to make Monterey Jack, Gouda, Colby Jack, Mexican-style cheeses like Asadero, and even some cheddar varieties.

Wisconsin cheesemakers have won more than 100 awards for their Colby. Colby has even taken the top prize at the World Championship Cheese Contest when Julie Hook became the first and only woman to be named World Champion for her Colby.

Colby is truly a homegrown Wisconsin original. Its innovative processing and massive popularity put Wisconsin on the cheesemaking map. But Colby is more than just an inventive, award-winning Wisconsin Original with deep roots in our state history – it's a celebration of Wisconsin – our small towns and family farms - and reminds us that just one small person from one small place, can take an idea and change history.

I ask that you please vote for Senate Bill 371 and join me in placing Colby among the symbols of our great state.



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.

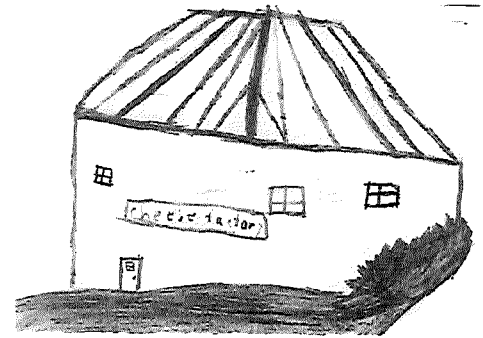
- ❖ **An All-American Original:** One of the first truly American cheeses, Colby was developed by an American in the United States and was not intended to be an imitation of any European cheese.
- ❖ **Wisconsin-Born:** Invented in 1885 and named for the farm community in Clark and Marathon counties where 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".

Wisconsin 4th Graders on Why Colby Should be Wisconsin's Official State Cheese:

Excerpts from letters to the bill authors

*"We work really hard on it in our factories for everyone to enjoy! When you eat it, it **melts in your mouth!** Please Pick Colby Cheese! Our Town would feel so proud!"* – Logan, 4th Grade

"Colby Cheese is 100% Wisconsin." – Teegan, 4th Grade



"Colby was invented in Colby, Wisconsin. It is now eaten all over the world. Our Wisconsin teams have fans that even wear Colby cheese heads." – Carlos, 4th Grade

*"I think the state cheese should be Colby because it tastes so good. **Everyone wants to eat it!**"* – Alex, 4th Grade

*"Colby Cheese was made in Wisconsin... is super moist... is softer than other cheeses... and **the younger the Colby the better it is.** That why Colby cheese should be [the state cheese]."* – Ray, 4th Grade

"It will be awesome having Colby as an honor to our town" – Frida, 4th Grade

"Babies love Colby cheese..." – Nicole, 4th Grade

*"Everybody that I know likes it and so far **ALL** 4th grade students want it"* – Jax, 4th Grade

*"I know a lot of people that like to eat Colby on pizza, cheeseburgers, and as a **snack**"* – Ericka, 4th Grade

**COLBY
CHEESE**

A hand-drawn illustration of a wedge of Colby cheese, showing holes and a simple outline. It is positioned to the right of the word "COLBY" in the "COLBY CHEESE" graphic.

"It is my favorite cheese" – Joshua, 4th Grade

"It would be awesome to see Colby Cheese next to all the other state symbols" – Ella, 4th Grade

"Everyone likes Colby, it is the best cheese in Wisconsin because it is good for your body.. it is a healthy snack!" – Tegan, 4th Grade

"Colby Cheese was made right here in Wisconsin and is being eaten all around the world. Colby Cheese is also the best tasting cheese. Our Wisconsin Teams even wear Colby Cheese heads" –



Diego, 4th Grade

"Colby has 7 grams of protein and 0 grams of sugar. I think it is the best and it is very healthy."

– Brooke, 4th Grade

"Colby Cheese is softer and has a more open texture and higher moisture. It is much milder and creamy than others. Also a fact is people can eat Colby cheese months or years after it is aged. Now that's a fact! Please make Colby the official state cheese." – Evan, 4th Grade

Colby
Cheese

"Colby is the best tasting cheese ever!" – Jett, 4th Grade



"Colby Cheese was invented in Colby, Wisconsin. We are nicknamed the Dairyland State and Colby cheeses is the Helthyist [sic] cheese in the world!" – Alexander, 4th Grade

"Colby is the best tasting cheese" – Brayden, 4th Grade

"There is not a lot of sugar in Colby Cheese." – Josiah, 4th Grade

"Wisconsin Produces 21% of our country's Colby cheese. Colby cheese tastes so good , everyone wants to eat it!" – Jeremiah, 4th Grade



DONNA M. ROZAR

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 69TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Office: (608) 267-0280
Toll Free: (888) 534-0069
Rep.Rozar@legis.wi.gov

P.O. Box 8953
Madison, WI 53708-8953

Testimony Before the Senate Committee on Government Operations, Legal Review, and Consumer Protection

SB 371

January 18, 2022

Good morning, Chairman Stroebel and members of the Senate Committee on Government Operations, Legal Review, and Consumer Protection. Thank you for holding a public hearing on this Bill and I appreciate the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 371.

In 2019, then Wisconsin State Representative from the 69th Assembly District Bob Kulp introduced AB572, which designated Colby cheese as the official state cheese of Wisconsin. Today, I am proud to continue these efforts of recognizing the cheese that helped Wisconsin garner the nickname “America’s Dairyland”, and propelled Wisconsin cheese-making onto the world stage.

In 1885, 16 year-old Joseph Steinwand of Colby, Wisconsin, dreamed up the new genre of cheese on the floor of his father’s small, wooden cheese factory. The young Steinwand modified the process of making the English Cheddar cheese by rinsing the curds in cold water and not removing excess moisture. This revolutionary new process allowed for a cheese that was softer, more sliceable, and mildly sweet as compared to the crumbly and sharper flavor of popular semi-hard cheeses like Cheddar.

The importance of this cold water wash to not only Wisconsin but to the cheese-making world at large is hard to quantify. This process is one of only a few cheese-making methods native to the United States, and the cold water wash is now used to make Monterey Jack, Gouda, Colby Jack, American Cheddar, and Asadero to name a few. This regional delicacy soon became a nationwide phenomenon, attracting cheesemakers from all over the country to Wisconsin to learn from the best.

Today, Wisconsin cheesemakers produce over 45 million pounds of the creamy delight, winning more than 100 awards for Colby cheese alone. In fact, there is not only statewide support for Colby cheese to become the official cheese of the Dairy state, but there is even support from cheese lovers as far away as Texas to give Colby the honor it so rightly deserves.

James W. Schmidt

Mayor

City of Colby

Thank you for giving us this opportunity to represent how important Colby cheese is to the State of Wisconsin. My name is James Schmidt, Mayor for the past 28 years of Colby and proud to say the Home of Colby Cheese.

Colby is in the Dairy center of Wisconsin, with a population of 2069.

Colby is split between two counties; it straddles the border between Marathon and Clark counties.

Colby is the birthplace of Colby cheese. A historical marker is located downtown commemorating Joseph Steinwand for the development of Colby cheese. We celebrate this heritage every year in July during Colby Cheese Days.

In 1885, Joseph Steinwand developed a new type of cheese at his father's cheese factory near Colby, Wisconsin. Colby cheese was named after the village, thus establishing the city in history.

Wisconsin's Slogan has been America's Dairyland since 1940. The dairy cow was designated the state's domestic animal in 1971. Milk is Wisconsin's official state beverage since 1987. Wisconsin cheese is the official state dairy product since 2017.

2022 is the year for America's Dairyland to name an official cheese. What better cheese than a Wisconsin original, Colby! It is a cheese that has been putting smiles on cheese lovers' faces since 1885.

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.



Testimony of Matthew Oehmichen

Community leader, media personality, business leader, agriculturalist

Of Colby, Wisconsin



Committee on Government Operations, Legal Review and Consumer Protection

January 18th 2022 - Room 411 South - State Capitol

Public Hearing concerning Bill SB371 – Designating Colby as the state cheese

Good day to you all.

As I begin, I want to thank you all for you all taking the time to hear public testimony on SB371 with the opportunity to take this out of committee.

My name is Matthew Oehmichen, of Colby Wisconsin. Bill SB371 is legislation to designate Colby the official state cheese. Symbolism connects us to traditions, to people, industries, and values. It matters. So when discussion of a new state symbol comes up it is a big deal, even it seems a *little cheesy*.

When we see only 'cheese' as our state dairy product it continues to show us how unoriginal our state symbols are. Majority of our symbols are shared and duplicated from other states, for instance our state beverage (milk) is shared with 28 states, our state bird (the American Robin) and flower (the wood violet) with three others. What do we have that makes our state so unique, that is 100% Wisconsin? Nothing. But with this bill we have an opportunity to have an icon, a symbol, that **no other state will ever have**.

No one has a state cheese, we would be the first. And not only that, it would be one that no one could ever, ever take away from us, because they can never claim Colby as their own; for we are so great at what we do we have created our own cheese.

Wisconsin is known as America's Dairyland, and for good reason- our number one output of all dairy products is cheese. Our cheese is world class. Year after year our cheese artisans bring home accolades of award-winning cheese, and have solidified Wisconsin has the world's top cheese producer. Our little state produces more Mozzarella than the whole country of Italy. If Wisconsin was a country we would be the 4th largest producer in the world. Pretty *gouda* if you ask me. No one does it better than Wisconsin. But that almost never happened. If not for the actions of a mild-mannered man from a rural community in northern Wisconsin in the late 19th century, if not for the dairy farms surrounding his home, Wisconsin could have lost one of its most iconic cultural identities. But by God's good grace; Colby cheese was created.

Colby launched our cheese industry. After 1885 our state began to see a rise in cheese artisans flocking to our state once they saw the sign of innovation to come. Yes, Brick cheese came first but it never had the impact like Colby had. It didn't go on to inspire the creation of 60% of all American cheeses, but Colby did. It wasn't created from the heart of America's Dairyland, that has the most dairy cows and dairy farms in Wisconsin, but Colby was. It isn't part of the iconic imagery we see in our institutions and in our pop culture, but Colby has been there the whole time.

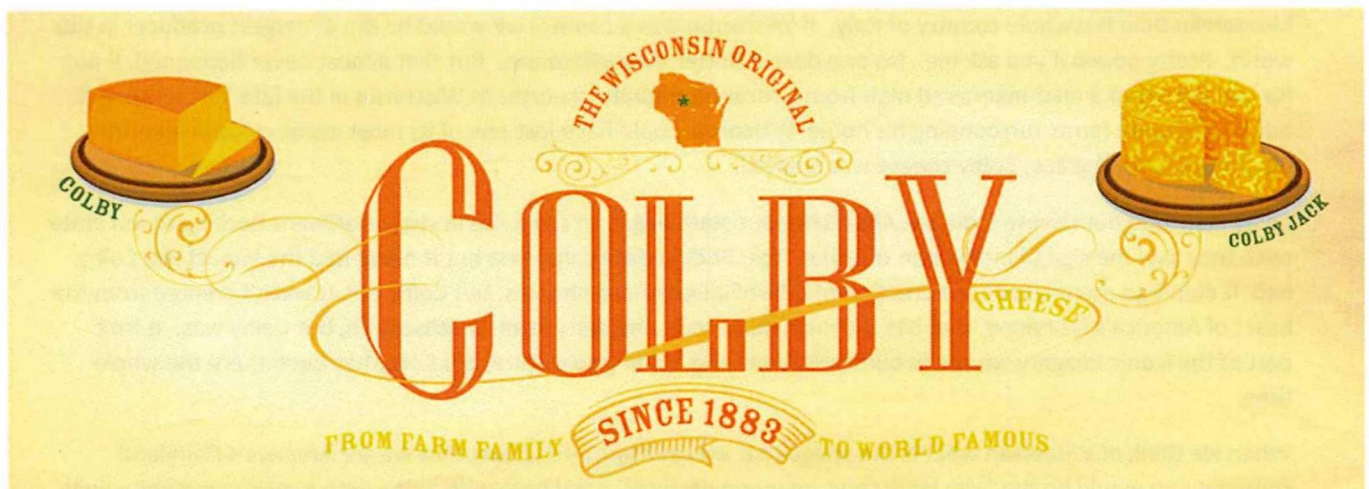
When we think of Wisconsin what is the image that we see? [image 1] Being that we are America's Dairyland common one would be the farm land; cows on green pastures, a red barn with a silo, with a rural community built around it. That scene was captured on state quarter design almost two decades ago that was circulated around the country. [image 2] We see the cow, our slogan, corn, and the wheel of cheese that has a missing wedge. If you ask anyone what cheese that is supposed to be, they might say cheddar. Wouldn't it make more sense for it to be a Wisconsin origin cheese, not a European one? So only Colby would make an obvious and correct choice. And besides it should be the better tasting one, because like we say back home about Colby: "*it's better than cheddar.*"

[image 3] Speaking of wedge, let's move on to an item everyone will recognize: the Cheese-Head of the Green Bay Packers. There is a quiet dignity of the cheese-wedge head gear, but its looks are unpractical: it looks like Swiss cheese tied yellow. There isn't any cheese that resembles that look; or is there? Genuine Colby cheese is described as "golden-to-orange...with tiny holes called 'eyes.'" Cheddar, Brick, Mozzarella do not resemble this, but Colby does. You're welcome Packer nation. [image 4] Next we see one of our biggest dairy institutions, the Center for Dairy Research, who brings product development, education, and research to support Wisconsin's dairy industry. Notice the very definite cheese wheel with a wedge cut out, golden almost orange in color. The cheese icon looks similar to the cheese seen on the state quarter, color on the Cheese hat, and if you're from the town of Colby it looks all-to-familiar. [image 5] This is the sign that greets you on state highway 13 coming into Colby. The font has changed a bit but our logo has been existent long before any of these other things we just discussed. The cheese on this bill is more ingrained in our social and economic culture than any other that we make. Making it a state symbol isn't so much crowning Colby as the king of cheese, we are giving it the recognition it has long deserved. [image 6] With this bill you are capturing that spirit of our state motto that drives us all, and bringing it together with the story about us (Wisconsin).

Colby cheese is truly a taste of Wisconsin. You are tasting a cheese that came from a rural community, just like those that dot the state's landscape, from border to border. The heart-beat of our state comes from its rural communities and small hometowns, like mine. They are a reflection of our state's sons and daughters who take pride in their work, are proud where they are from, and who dare to dream bigger than their town's borders. That deserves to be recognized and celebrated. With this bill you will do just that.

The moment is here, the opportunity is before us with this noncontroversial bill. We can mark the history books today when this legislature brought Wisconsin its first state symbol that is 100% authentic Wisconsin.

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.





Wisconsin Cheese Survey



Demographics of Participants

WISCONSIN

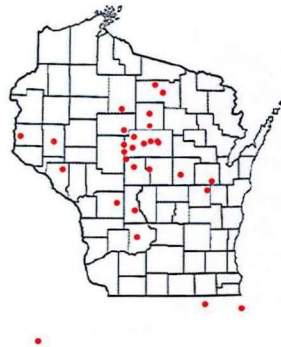
Merrill, Tomah, Stratford, Marathon, Rhinelander, Colby, Spencer, Wausau, Medford, Schofield, Irma, Hudson, Arpin, Marshfield, Neenah, Rudolph, Menomonie, Ogema, Hazelhurst, Waupaca, Mondovi, Edgar, Appleton, Athens, Mauston, Logansville,

ILLINOIS

Chicago, "Northern Illinois"

IOWA

"North Eastern Iowa"



Study conducted at the Edgar Steam Engine Show Sunday August 29th 11:30am – 3:30pm.

A blind taste test of mozzarella (marked A), mild brick (marked B), fresh Colby (marked C) was set up. After sampling each they were then asked to pick the cheese they best preferred. Taste, texture was the most assessed to their choice.

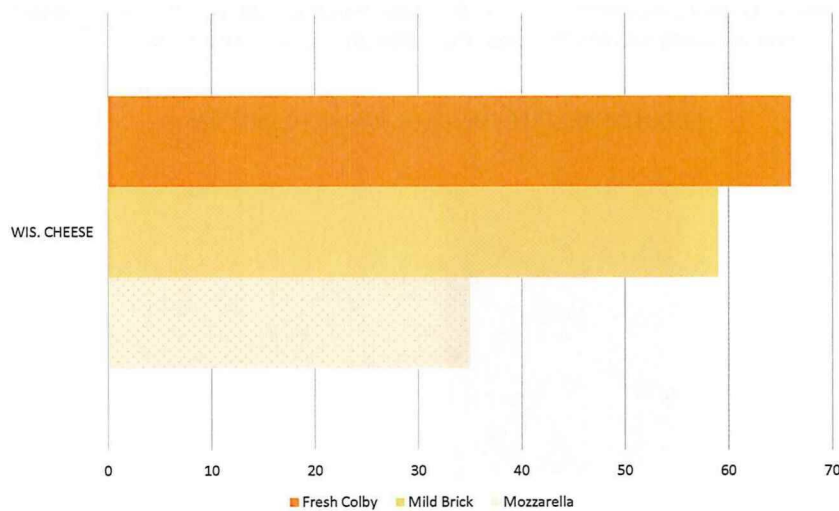
In total 160 people participated in the testing.

After the consumed all the cheese our team asked the participant(s) two questions:

Q1. Should Wisconsin have an official state cheese?

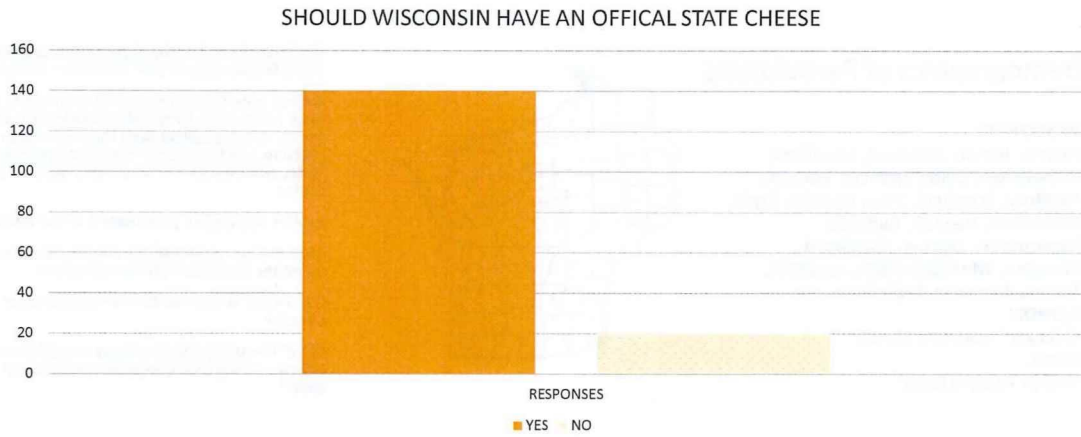
Q2. If Wisconsin was to choose an official state cheese, should that cheese be native to our state?

WISCONSIN BLIND CHEESE TASTE TEST

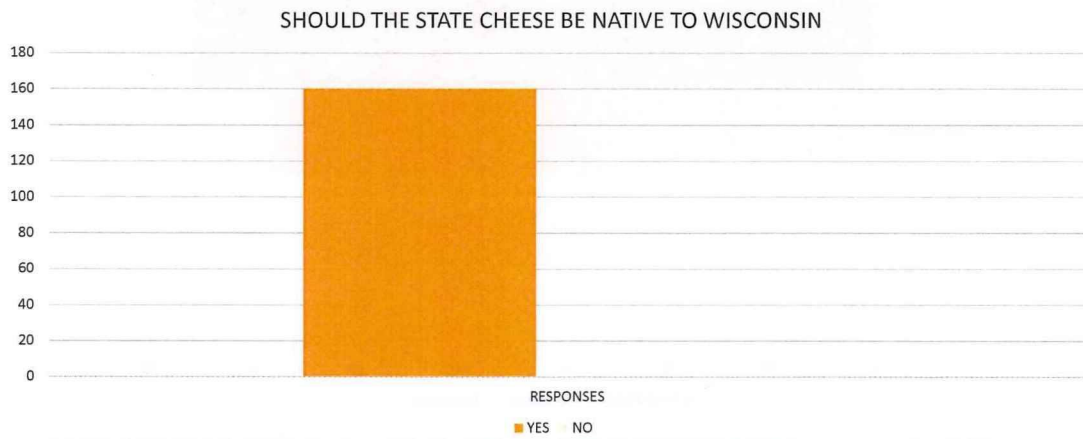


The cheeses chosen were regarded as best representation of the Wisconsin cheese industry. Mozzarella is our most produced cheese, Brick and Colby are Wisconsin's only native cheeses. Colby remained the most favorable regarding taste, texture, and overall satisfaction.

88% of the participants "YES" - that Wisconsin should have a state designated cheese



100% of the participants answered "yes" that the state cheese should be native to Wisconsin
[without being asked] 63% stated that Colby should be a state symbol



Good Morning,

My name is Ann Luckey and I want to thank you for the opportunity to testify before the Senate Committee on Government Operations, Legal Review and Consumer Protection to ask for your support in furthering the cause of naming Colby as the state cheese of Wisconsin.

I have a personal interest in this cause as I am the great-granddaughter of Joseph Steinwand, the founder of the cheese named Colby. But that is not the only reason I am here. I am here as a resident of the state of Wisconsin and appreciate being known as a "cheesehead".

Naming Colby as the state cheese of Wisconsin gives credence and recognition to all the cheesemakers in our state. Joseph Steinwand, who created the Colby cheese process, was not the first cheesemaker in Wisconsin. He was not the largest and maybe not even the best. What he did though was create a process that produced a great cheese. And after doing that he did not name the cheese after himself, or his family or call attention to himself. The cheese became known as COLBY. The town where he lived, where he raised his family, where he worked to support his community.

And isn't that what we in Wisconsin are so proud of? We work hard, we work together and through producing Colby cheese we have achieved a status among many, many, people. There are perhaps hundreds of cheesemakers in the state. Imagine the pride of the ones that produce Colby Cheese, when they can boast to their markets that they produce the state cheese of Wisconsin. That they use the process that was created here by one of the sons of their own state.

Colby cheese is not so much about Colby as it is about Wisconsin and what it means to live here and work here and take great pride in what is produced here. We create a product that is nationally known.

Make it official and give Wisconsinites and cheesemakers bragging rights around the world!

It's time to give the people of Wisconsin another reason to make a great state.