

Opening Statement of Chairman Ron Johnson
“From Crop to Craft Beer:
Federal Regulation’s Impact on America’s Food and Agriculture”
Wednesday, August 17, 2016

As prepared for delivery:

Good morning and welcome.

In Washington, it’s common practice to leap before looking. Policymakers don’t often like to do the hard work of laying out the reality of a problem and understanding the actual impact of various options before jumping to a conclusion. They often act based on intended outcomes, without regard for the real-world consequences of policy decisions.

This is especially true for federal regulations. We often assume the benefits without really attempting to understand the costs. We start with the shared goals of a clean environment and safe food – things we all agree on – then assume another regulation will help us accomplish those goals. We pile layer upon layer upon layer of new regulations atop the old ones without acknowledging that they may be doing little to improve the environment or make food safer. Worse yet, they may even be counterproductive to our shared goals.

We’ve reached a point where the annual regulatory burden is around \$2 trillion, which translates to approximately \$14,800 per American household, with even more regulations in the pipeline. The massive regulatory bureaucracy is a dead weight to the economy, making it harder for businesses to expand and hire, individuals’ incomes to grow, and entrepreneurs to innovate.

Today we’re looking at just one small part of that regulatory burden imposed on the food and agriculture sector – and as Wisconsin’s senior U.S. Senator, it is natural for me to categorize beer as a food item.

This hearing is an opportunity to hear directly from the folks who work tirelessly to grow, produce, and distribute the products we depend on every day. And it’s a chance to understand how regulations can too often undermine the very objectives we all desire.

I’m especially happy to be here in the home state of my colleague, Sen. Joni Ernst, where we’ll have an opportunity to hear from constituents from this very region. Thank you all for being here today. I look forward to your testimony.