

TESTIMONY ON RAW MILK
FOR
PENNSYLVANIA SENATE COMMITTEE FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL AFFAIRS
By
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Thank you for allowing me to express my opinion on the raw milk situation in Pennsylvania. My name is Peggy Wolf and I live on a farm west of Carlisle. I grew up drinking certified raw milk in northern New Jersey, raised my children on our farm drinking our own hand-milked, very uninspected raw milk, and have been using raw milk products of Mark Nolt for the last several years. Never, in all this time have I had, or known anyone who has had, any problem with raw milk or raw milk products.

As I see it, there are two issues here. One is the safety and nutritional value of raw milk products. The other is a personal freedom to choose what affects our bodies.

I am not a bacteriologist or even a trained nutritionist, but I have done a good deal of reading over the years, have raised four, bright healthy children, and have come to the conclusion that the benefits of drinking raw milk far out-weigh the small risk involved. Yes, milk can indeed transmit serious disease, and pasteurization has been a boon for large scale production and transportation of milk products and for those who must-or choose to-buy those products at a supermarket.

But, milk, carefully and cleanly produced from healthy cows, and sold directly to the consumer carries virtually no risk. In all the years since the current laws were enacted there have been only a small handful of cases of illness possibly caused by raw milk. Contrast that with all the recent scares about beef, spinach, and green onions.

Life is full of risks. I took a risk getting into my car to come here today, as did you. People are killed every day in cars but we don't pass laws to eliminate them. I'm even allowed to parachute off the high bridge over the New River in West Virginia, where they kill people regularly, and yet, I'm not allowed to buy a healthy wonderful tasting food produced by my neighbor. Does that make good sense?

The health benefits of good raw milk are many. The research on which I based my decision long ago to drink raw milk is old but I'm sure current research would or does come to the same conclusions. There are probably others here today who are better suited to give you these details. Suffice it to say that pasteurization alters or kills hormones, enzymes, steroids and proteins. Raw milk can be a source of natural Vitamins C,D and E. Pasteurized has little or none of these. Raw milk is alive, pasteurized milk is "dead" and tastes cooked to me. Research shows, more and more, that food that is alive, as little altered from its natural state as possible, is best for us.

The US government's own Center for Disease Control website states that "those consuming raw milk are 2.5 times less likely to contract food borne illness(from milk) than those consuming pasteurized milk and 3.5 times less likely to contract food borne illness from consuming other foods." "Raw milk contains numerous components that kill bad bacteria and strengthen the immune system....These components are mostly destroyed or greatly reduced by pasteurization."(A Campaign for Real Milk-Sally Fallon) So drinking raw milk may actually protect us from food borne illness rather than cause it. A very recent research report in *Clinical and Experimental Allergy* states that drinking farm milk protects children from hay fever and allergy.

Among raw milk advocates are many who can give personal testimonies about their families' health improvement. Parent after parent tells stories of how they believe their children were cured of many different health conditions after adding raw milk to their diets. My story may be completely coincidental, but it's interesting to note that of my four children, three badly needed to have their teeth straightened. The only one who didn't, was the last one who was conceived, born and raised after we moved onto our farm and were all drinking raw milk.

Besides the nutritional benefits of raw milk the other issue that concerns me is that of freedom of personal choice. As a child I was always taught that "Your freedom to swing your fist around ends where your neighbor's nose begins." I may not yell "fire" in a crowded theater, because that's "hitting my neighbor's nose," but drinking raw milk myself will not harm anyone else. I should be free to make the informed choice to assume the very slight risk of illness if I wish.

Our country is moving farther and farther toward the philosophy of trying to protect everyone from everything. I resent someone else's telling me what is good for my health. I should be free to investigate raw milk and decide that the benefits outweigh the possible risks, just as others should be free to buy pasteurized milk if they wish.

Lastly, an issue of which raw milk production and sales are a part but which extends far beyond that narrow focus. To maintain the quality of life for this and future generations we need to preserve as much open space as possible. Increasing the profitability of small farms is one way to meet this need. The sale of raw milk products, which are more and more in demand, directly from the farm to the customer eliminates several middlemen and provides one more way for the farmer to "add value" to his product and increase his income. If he can make a good living on the farm he will be likely to keep that land open with all its indirect societal benefits.

Initially I was in favor only of altering the laws to allow permitted sale of all raw milk products instead of just fluid milk and hard cheese from raw milk as it stands now. However, in speaking with small local producers I've come to understand that many regulations in the permitting system require equipment that places unnecessary financial burdens on them. Expensive stainless steel and tile do not guarantee good, clean milk; operator care does.

If a farmer makes goat cheese, he needs a permit for that, if he adds chives to it he needs another permit for that and if he adds garlic that calls for yet another permit. All this expense and trouble, when spread over the hundreds of cows and thousands of gallons of milk from large commercial dairies may be acceptable, but for the small producer it greatly limits-or eliminates-the ability to diversify and make a profit.

Both of my grandfathers were lawyers. I can remember their telling me, when I was a child, that sometimes the wheels of justice grind exceedingly slow. They believed in obeying the law but if it was a bad law, said, "Change it!"

That's what I hope will happen here today: that we will begin the process of changing or amending Pennsylvania's raw milk laws so that raw milk and all its products can be produced and sold legally in a direct farmer to consumer situation without government regulation. This will allow good small farmers like Mark Nolt to make a decent living and keep their farms operating. These farms will then remain as open space with all its societal benefits: aquifer recharge areas, air filtration and scenic beauty. And I will be able to buy a wonderful, healthy, wholesome product from my good neighbor.

Thank you.