

Energy and Natural Resources Committee

Im giving testimony, opposing, SB2155.

I will use my 2024, antelope application, as example for my opposition.

Im a farm/ranch owner in Sioux Co, which is in antelope unit 6A. This is a big unit of approx. 3700 sq. miles. So there are a lot of landowners in this unit.

In 2024, I applied for the gratis license but did not get drawn. There were 100 tags, in that unit, and over 100 landowners applied. With the present setup, G&F gives 50% gratis tags. When there are more gratis apps than tags they allow another 50% of the number off apps over the original 50% mark but the landowners have to go into a lottery against each other. So they gave 75 gratis tags of the 100 available. Since there was more landowners, than tags, we had to go into a lottery against each other. Hence the reason I did not get drawn.

SB2155 will make it even harder for landowners to get a license. This bill wants to reduce the number to a straight 50% of the number of buck tags. So in 6A, over half of the landowners, that applied, would not have gotten a tag. (25% more than in 2024)

I believe the G&F use the same system for deer but its not an issue there as there are a lot more tags offered, so the amount of landowners applying never get to 50%.

Antelope numbers are a lot lower but making a comeback. I would have to say that landowners have more to do with this than anyone.

If antelope numbers go up this whole issue goes away when 50% of the tag number is more than the number of gratis applications. (as it is with deer already)

FYI- The Standing Rock Reservation is also inside this unit. In 2024 the SR G&F put out over 200 tags for the reservation. The Standing Rock reservation is inside boundaries of 6A but only makes up 1/3 of the 6A unit. These 200 + tags are not considered in the ND G&F system.

I realize it is not easy for, non-landowners, to get an antelope tag when numbers are low. For example, my children, have been applying for over 6 years and still have never drawn a tag. I wouldn't even be on the same playing field, as them, as they have 6 years of preference points built up and I will be starting from scratch. At least with the gratis tag we are allowed to at least enjoy one tag on our land.

You hear all the time that G&F, and other groups, are trying to improve landowner-hunter relationships. This bill will do the opposite. What incentive is there for a landowner, who hunts, to let others hunt a species, on his land, that he is not able to hunt himself.

Passing this bill will close gates.

Joe Maher

Farm/Ranch owner Sioux Co.

