



Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee
Testimony on HB 1327

North Dakota Game and Fish Department
Terry Steinwand, Director
January 21, 2021

Chairman Porter and members of the House Energy and Natural Resources Committee, my name is Terry Steinwand and I'm Director of the North Dakota Game and Fish Department. I'm here today to testify in opposition to HB 1327.

As anyone that hunts deer knows, deer gun season is a popular activity in North Dakota and is as much a social issue for hunters and families as anything. Many former residents like to come back to hunt with family members but many times aren't drawn for a license. This bill states that any current non-resident who has formerly resided in the state for at least ten years, which do not need to be consecutive years, must have one percent of the current deer licenses made available to them. There are two issues with this. First, the bill states that an applicant's status as a former resident must be confirmed with a procedure developed by the director. This requirement has been discussed internally and we can't find any mechanism that would verify whether or not any individual has lived in North Dakota for a period of 10 years of their life. Additionally, if a mechanism were found it would likely take a tremendous amount of personnel time to verify these records but it's unknown as to how many would apply given this new provision. The department has worked diligently to reduce the amount of time from the deadline of the deer gun application to the time of the lottery drawing. In past years this could take up to 7 or 8 weeks to accomplish due to the time it takes to verify gratis applications. We've reduced that time to approximately two weeks by readily accessing electronic county land information and are working to reduce it even further. If this bill were passed and we could find a way to verify a former resident's status it would once again increase the time from application deadline to lottery draw.

A secondary issue is availability of deer licenses for residents of North Dakota. Current law mandates that we set aside one percent of allocated licenses for non-residents. This bill would set aside an additional one percent. In 2020, over 30,600 resident applicants were unsuccessful in the first and second lotteries. The number of unsuccessful resident applicants has been as high as 40,000 in past years. Allocating even more licenses to nonresidents would increase the number of unsuccessful resident applicants proportionally and would undoubtedly be an unwelcome change to those individual residents.

For these reasons I request a DO NOT Pass on HB 1327.