



Testimony in Support of House Bill 1538

Date: February 2, 2023  
Submitted By: Amber Klingbeil  
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To: Representative Porter and Members of the North Dakota House Energy and Natural Resources Committee

As the Director of Tourism for Garrison ND, I am the writing this letter to show support of House Bill 1538. Garrison sits just off of Lake Sakakawea which makes our community a great place to fish, including holding fishing tournaments. We hold the ND Governor's Cup every year, which brings 260 teams, each consisting of 2 people to Garrison every July. The ND Governor's Cup looks to sponsors to help cover costs of fees, including the conservation fee. When the cap was removed this added an additional expense to the tournament, which added additional expense to the sponsors, most of whom are the businesses of Garrison. Tournaments like these bring a lot of additional revenue to our community whether it be fuel, lodging, eating, or shopping.

Garrison sponsored the Cabela's NWT fishing tournament back in 2017 and again in 2020 which brought in 240 anglers, 65% of which were non-residents. With this tournament Garrison and the state of ND, received national exposure through marketing channels. This tournament saw an impact in many other areas as well as but not limited to more than two weeks of lodging, fuel, bait & tackle, fishing licenses, food, liquor, and any other purchases made by anglers pre-fishing prior to the tournament. There was also an increase of daily & seasonal passes out of Fort Stevenson State Park. The removal of the cap on tournaments as this one, puts those fees onto the communities hosting the tournaments as the tournament itself will not pay those fees, resulting in them looking elsewhere and not returning to our communities.

With each event the fishermen traveling to the host community provide an economic impact to the state itself. Each are spending additional money on fuel, food, and lodging in other North Dakota communities that they travel through. They are also all purchasing fishing licenses most of them, for the entire season.

North Dakota has the highest conservation fees compared to our surrounding states of Minnesota (\$250-\$550 per tournament), South Dakota (\$0), Montana (\$3/angler), Michigan (\$0), and Wisconsin (\$25 per tournament). We as a state were already charging high conservation fees.

The economic impact of being able to host these tournaments is crucial in our communities and state. If we do not amend the Century Code that is currently in place, the national tournament organizations will not put North Dakota on their radar, not coming back to our communities or state again. If they do return, the fees may be passed onto the hosting communities, making it difficult to host, putting strains on our CVB's, resulting in less marketing for the State of North Dakota. The community of Garrison, as well as other fishing communities around the state, have worked too hard to build these relations and momentum to let this amendment not go through.

As of now, we are losing our economic impact to our surrounding states. In my opinion, it's not very North Dakota nice. The North Dakota tourism website itself claims that ND is a top destination for walleye anglers far and wide and even touches on the fishing tournaments. Fishing tournaments are a great way to bring people to our state. North Dakota should be a welcoming state to our visitors coming for recreational sports like fishing and the tournaments that come with it. That is why I am in support of and ask that you do pass HB 1538.

Sincerely,



Amber Klingbeil  
Director  
Garrison Convention & Visitor's Bureau