



**Attn:** House Energy and Natural Resources Committee  
**Re:** Senate Bill 2297  
**Date:** March 7, 2023  
**Position:** Recommend Amendments

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Honorable Members of the House Energy and Natural Resources Committee,

On behalf of the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation (CSF), I respectfully urge you to consider amending North Dakota Senate Bill 2297 (SB 2297) which would provide long term volunteers of North Dakota's Fish and Game Department (NDFG) a free lifetime combination hunting and fishing license. While CSF agrees that these volunteers should be recognized for their long-term commitment and dedication to NDFG, SB 2297, as written, carries potential negative impacts as it relates to the American System of Conservation Funding (ASCF) that must be considered.

Founded in 1989, CSF is the informed authority across outdoor issues and serves as the primary conduit for influencing public policy. Working with the Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus (CSC), the Governors Sportsmen's Caucus (GSC), and the National Assembly of Sportsmen's Caucuses (NASC), CSF gives a voice to hunters, anglers, recreational shooters, and trappers on Capitol Hill and throughout state capitols advocating on vital outdoor issues that are the backbone of our nation's conservation legacy.

Funded by the sale of hunting and fishing licenses and permits, along with revenue generated from self-imposed excise taxes through the Pittman-Robertson Act and Dingell-Johnson Act with Wallop-Breaux Amendments, the ASCF serves as the primary source of revenue for NDFG. While the implications of discounting or providing a no-cost license on overall license revenue are obvious, what is less known is the impact of these discounts on the ability of NDFG to fully claim their portion of revenue made available through the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration (Pittman-Robertson) and Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration (Dingell-Johnson) Acts. In making apportionments of Pittman-Robertson and Dingell-Johnson funds, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service uses a formula<sup>1</sup> that, in part, considers the number of eligible hunting (Pittman-Robertson) and fishing (Dingell-Johnson) licenses sold. To be counted, licenses not only need to be obtained by each hunter or angler, but must also result in revenue collected by the state fish and

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<sup>1</sup> Congressional Research Service. April 5, 2019. Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act: Understanding Apportionments for States and Territories. Accessed: January 19, 2023. <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/misc/R45667.pdf>

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wildlife management agency (i.e., NDFG). In turn, each certified hunting license results in, approximately, an additional \$26 and each fishing license brings in \$10 of federal aid.<sup>2</sup>

While CSF understands the desire to provide benefits for certain groups, we respectfully ask the Committee to consider amending SB 2297 to also include specific language that creates a reimbursement to NDFG from the general fund for any license or permit revenue forgone as a result of this and any other free or discounted license or permit provided by the legislature going forward. In so doing, the legislature will retain the opportunity to provide these incentives or rewards to deserving demographics without unduly threatening the ability of NDFG to receive the funding necessary to continue its work managing North Dakota's public trust fish and wildlife resources for the benefit of all North Dakotans. Examples of this framework are already in other states for where discounts are granted by the legislature. Given NDFG's almost complete reliance on the ASCF, we believe that these amendments would be a valuable addition in the Peace Garden State.

To conclude, CSF recognizes the years of dedication demonstrated by those who have so selflessly volunteered with the NDFG. However, we maintain that no-cost licenses carry potential negative impacts for the agency that these volunteers have sought to support. Should the legislature determine that the issuance of no-cost licenses to these volunteers, or any other demographic, be necessary, we recommend amending SB 2297 to include the aforementioned reimbursement language to ensure that the integrity of the ASCF is maintained. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this issue. Should you require additional information on this, or other sportsmen-related topics, please feel free to contact me at any time.

Sincerely,



**Robert Matthews**

Senior Coordinator, Great Lakes States

Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation

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<sup>2</sup> Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation. 2023. Reimbursement to Fish and Wildlife Agencies for Free and Discounted Licenses. Accessed: January 19, 2023. <https://congressionalsportsmen.org/policies/state/reimbursement-to-fish-and-wildlife-agencies-for-free-and-discounted-license>