

69th Legislative Session
Energy and Natural Resources Committee
23 January 2025

Good morning, Chairman Patten, members of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee. I am Senator Mike Wobbema, District 24. In the interest of transparency, I am a veteran with a 90 percent disability rating by the Veterans Administration. Senate Bill 2099 is intended to provide a special privilege to those military veterans who have paid a significant physical toll in the service to our great country. It provides for the North Dakota Department of Game and Fish to provide to veterans who are rated 100 percent disabled by the Veterans Administration a deer license upon request, without regard to the lottery system. This Bill came about as a result of a conversation with a constituent during this last campaign season. His comments to me were based upon a frustration of waiting several years to obtain a deer license, mentioning his service and disability. I thought he had a point and hence this legislation request. Incidentally, he had been shot in the leg, stabbed in the shoulder, and had an eye knocked out of its socket during combat operations, though you wouldn't know it to look at him. His love for hunting though, was very clearly evident in our conversation.

Those who have been rated 100 percent disabled by the Veterans Administration have been so rated because they have been physically or psychologically injured through combat action, accident, or just through the wear and tear of a career of service. Whatever the reason for this level of disability rating, they have paid a price to which this country, and the state of North Dakota owe a debt of gratitude. I believe this request is a reasonable consideration and demonstrates our gratitude for their service and sacrifice.

To put some numbers to this discussion, there were 341 veterans rated 100 percent disabled who utilized the veteran combined hunting license in 2023. As an aside, there were 326 veterans rated 50 percent or more disabled who obtained fishing licenses. I believe the numbers of those who would use this benefit are low in comparison to the approximately 50,000 deer licenses available by the North Dakota Department of Game and Fish.

Thank you for the opportunity to come before you with this request. I will stand for any questions.

Respectfully submitted,

Senator Mike Wobbema

District 24