



Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee
Testimony on SB 2184

North Dakota Game and Fish Department
Scott Peterson, Deputy Directory
January 21, 2021

Chairman Kreun and members of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, my name is Scott Peterson; I serve as the Deputy Director for the North Dakota Game and Fish Department (Department). I am testifying today in opposition of SB 2184.

North Dakota state law (N.D.C.C. 20.1-03-01.1) directs the Game and Fish Department director to "... select, train, and certify persons or department personnel qualified to provide instruction on, firearms and bow safety...". In addition to Department staff, Game and Fish enlists over 800 volunteer instructors to help deliver North Dakota's Hunter Education program.

In addition to Hunter Education instructors, the Department also enrolls over 100 more volunteer instructors for its other education programs:

- Hooked on Fishing
- Fur Harvester Education
- Archery Instruction
- Boat and Water Safety
- Conservation Education

All these volunteer instructors serve as agents for the Department, assisting in carrying out its programs and mission. Their motivation is that of service to agency and the citizens of the state. In recognition for their dedicated and valued service in delivering this program, the Department has a long-standing policy of providing special recognition and incentives to those instructors who have reached specific benchmarks of volunteer years and hours of instruction:

- 2 years + 50 hrs = Vest
- 5 years + 125 hrs = Jacket
- 10 years + 250 hrs = Plaque
- 15 years + 375 hrs = Knife
- 20 years + 500 hrs = Binoculars
- 25 years + 625 hrs = Gun
- 30 years + 750 hrs = Lifetime Hunting and Fishing License (N.D.C.C. 20.1-02-05(25))

It is our opinion that the provisions provided in this bill have numerous unintended consequences:

1. Recognizes and rewards only one category of our volunteer instructor corps
2. Would attract volunteers for the wrong reasons and motives
3. Will result in a flood of volunteers; more than we have a need for
4. Will significantly reduce other deer license applicant's chances and opportunity for highly valued and sought-after antlered deer licenses
5. Will eliminate or nearly eliminate other applicant's chances for once-in-a-lifetime trophy species (moose, elk, or bighorn sheep)
6. By reducing license opportunities for new hunters, it runs counter to the Department's R3 - Recruitment, Retention, and Reactivation efforts

And finally, for perspective, in 2020, we had 403 moose tags, 445 elk tags, and 5 bighorn sheep tags available to the general public. Once you remove approximately 800 tags from that pool for certified hunter education instructors, you can see that very few tags would be made available to the general public. I would speculate that this would not be widely supported by that segment of the hunting population.

For these reasons, the North Dakota Game and Fish Department respectfully requests a DO NOT PASS vote on SB 2184.