

**Respected Members of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee,**

*Chairman Dale Patton, Vice Chairman Jeffery J. Magnum and Respected Senators:*

*I am asking for you to oppose HB 1538 with a DO NOT PASS out of committee. While I certainly do agree with some of the concepts proposed in HB 1538, I believe, that the regulation of fishing tournaments can best be addressed through administrative code/rules by the North Dakota Game and Fish Department (NDGF), and not through century code. I am not against any fishing tournament, but maintaining these regulations in administrative code/rules gives the flexibility to make changes throughout the biennium, rather than just through the process of the legislative session.*

*Moreover, the 10% Conservation Fee (the only fees used in obtaining a permit from the NDGF to have a tournament currently as no permit fees are required as of now) applied to fishing tournaments entry fees that HB 1538 is trying to eliminate – and is a part of the current administrative code/rules – has a very important part in helping in part to fund education about fishing along with helping in part for upkeep of infrastructure – fish cleaning stations, fish grinders, boat ramps, parking lots, vault toilets, etc. These are all items that our local lake communities obtain monies for in aiding the updating process at some place and time associated with the wear and tear of these parts of the infrastructure/resource of our great fisheries in North Dakota!*

*The current form of this bill states no conservation fees can be charged for fishing tournaments. Moreover, it does state that a permit fee may be charged. A fiscal statement/note should be applied to this to see what affects it does have by eliminating Conservation Fees. The permit fees are used for what – administrative costs as it does not state they replace*

*Conservation Fees. What money is going to be used to replace these monies lost that help pay for – in part – these infrastructure items?*

*This bill has always been about elimination of the Conservation Fees brought on by a couple of National Fishing Tournaments and a couple CVB's who pay for them to come to North Dakota. One big national tournament in particular, the National Walleye Tournament (NWT), does not come on its own merits and accepts a large payment to show up in North Dakota. Do these tournaments help local economies – perhaps, some, but one should look at all costs in deciphering any supposed economic gains, or losses. I see there is no fiscal statement/note associated with this bill stating either the economic gains/losses, and/or what the loss of the Conservation Fee's may bring. This should be done to gain a better understanding for everyone involved including the approximate 150,000 residents licensed to fish in North Dakota.*

*Some items in this bill, probably, should have been a stand-up part alone on their own merits regarding changes that need to be made to the current regulations through the administrative process. One concept I agree with in this bill is getting our youth involved in the outdoors and in particular fishing. Youth/High School fishing tournaments that could be developed to help get young people involved in fishing. However, I am a believer that any High School Fishing activities through organized events such as leagues or tournaments should include the North Dakota High School Activities Association (NDHSAA) to maintain that students participating in any High School competitions maintain an amateur relationship while being High School Students. Again, I feel these can be accomplished, by working with organization as the North Dakota Sportfishing Congress that works closely with the North Dakota Game and Fish Department to address these concerns through the administrative code/rules process.*

***For these reasons, I respectfully request a “Do Not Pass” recommendation coming out of Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee on HB 1538. Thank you,***

PS I was born a North Dakotan, Raised a North Dakotan, Never left the state North Dakota, and have been Supporting North Dakotan's by Supporting North Dakota my entire life.

Sincerely,  
Jeffery A. Herman  
District 32 Resident  
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