

**2025 SENATE ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES**

**SB 2309**

# 2025 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

## Energy and Natural Resources Committee

Peace Garden Room, State Capitol

SB 2309

2/6/2025

Relating to youth deer hunting permits.
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9:15 a.m. Chairman Patten opened the hearing.

Members present: Chairman Patten, Senators: Beard, Boehm, Enget, Gerhardt, and Van Oosting. Vice Chairman Kessel absent.

### Discussion Topics:

- Personal experience
- White tail deer tag
- Mule deer
- Youth tag
- Overhunting
- Licensing

9:15 a.m. Senator Gerhardt, District 34, introduced the bill.

9:20 a.m. Rita R. Goettle testified in favor and submitted testimony #35635.

9:23 a.m. William Haase, Assistant Wildlife Division Chief of Game and Fish Department, testified in favor and submitted testimony #35406.

### Additional written testimony:

Kurt Swenson submitted testimony in favor #35767.

9:29 a.m. Chairman Patten closed the hearing.

*Kendra McCann, Committee Clerk*



House Energy and Natural Resources Committee  
Testimony on SB 2309

North Dakota Game and Fish Department  
Bill Haase, Assistant Wildlife Division Chief  
February 6, 2025

Chairman Patten and members of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, my name is Bill Haase, and I serve as the Assistant Wildlife Division Chief for the North Dakota Game and Fish Department (Department). I appreciate the opportunity to testify today in support of SB 2309.

Expanding youth hunting opportunities is a top priority for the Department. In recent years, participation in the antlerless youth gun deer license has steadily increased. Currently, this opportunity is available to youth who turn 11, 12, or 13 in the year of the hunt and is limited to antlerless whitetail deer.

SB 2309 would provide the governor's proclamation with the flexibility to include antlerless mule deer in this season. This change would allow us to expand youth hunting opportunities in units where mule deer populations can support additional harvest.

For these reasons, the Department respectfully urges the committee to issue a "Do Pass" recommendation for SB 2309. Thank you for the opportunity to testify, and I am happy to answer any questions.

Testimony of Rita Goettle  
Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee  
2-6-25

Chairman Patten and members of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee. My name is Rita Goettle. I'm speaking today in favor of senate bill 2309.

I have been hunting for the past 2 years with a youth tag. Yet I still have not gotten my first deer. Why is that? Because I have only ever seen about 3 whitetails and they're either too far away for me to shoot or I'm just not in the right spot.

But where I hunt with my dad there are lots of mule deer. Like a lot!! And if I had a tag that allowed me to shoot a mullie, I would have gotten one my first year, and again this year. I've even had one lined up in my scope ready to shoot but just not able to pull the trigger. Multiple times! We were practicing of course so I would know what to do in case I saw a whitetail. But that never happened.

I have learned a lot in the youth hunt, and even saw my dad shoot a deer! A mullie deer, not a whitetail. He also shot buck this year, a mullie buck, not a whitetail buck. But I believe I could have learned more and had a better experience if I could have hunted mullie antlerless as well as whitetail antlerless.

I urge this committee to vote do pass on this bill. And I will be happy to answer any questions. Thank you.

Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee

Testimony on SB 2309 (IN FAVOR)

Kurt Swenson, Beulah, ND District 33

Chairman Patten, Vice Chairman Kessel and members of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, my name is Kurt Swenson from Beulah. .

I am submitting this testimony in favor of SB 2309.

I have been perplexed over the years why the exceptional youth deer hunting season for youth ages 11, 12 and 13 was limited to whitetail deer only. Many of us live in areas that are dominated by mule deer or have sustainable huntable populations of mule deer and white-tail deer.

We open our land up for the youth deer hunting season every year, but were not able to offer the 11–13-year-olds an opportunity due to EHD decimating the whitetail population a few years back. Yet, we had excellent numbers of mule deer that could have been harvested by these youth, and the current statute denies them this opportunity. It also denies us as a landowner the ability to use this youth season to help manage the deer herd in our local area.

I respectfully ask you to vote DO PASS vote on SB 2309.

# 2025 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

## Energy and Natural Resources Committee Peace Garden Room, State Capitol

SB 2309  
2/6/2025

Relating to youth deer hunting permits.
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9:31 a.m. Chairman Patten opened the hearing.

Members present: Chairman Patten, Senators: Beard, Boehm, Enget, Gerhardt, and Van Oosting. Vice Chairman Kessel absent.

### Discussion Topics:

- Watch populations
- Committee Action

9:31 a.m. Senator Beard moved a do pass.

9:31 a.m. Senator Van Oosting seconded the motion.

Senators	Vote
Senator Dale Patten	Y
Senator Greg Kessel	A
Senator Todd Beard	Y
Senator Keith Boehm	Y
Senator Mark Enget	Y
Senator Justin Gerhardt	Y
Senator Desiree Van Oosting	Y

Motion Passed 6-0-1.

9:32 a.m. Senator Gerhardt will carry the bill.

9:33 a.m. Committee discussion on upcoming bills to vote on.

9:33 a.m. Chairman Patten closed the hearing.

*Kendra McCann, Committee Clerk*

**REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE**  
**SB 2309 ([25.1115.02000](#))**

**Energy and Natural Resources Committee (Sen. Patten, Chairman)** recommends **DO PASS** (6 YEAS, 0 NAYS, 1 ABSENT AND NOT VOTING). SB 2309 was placed on the Eleventh order on the calendar. This bill does not affect workforce development.

**2025 HOUSE ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES**

**SB 2309**

# 2025 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

## Energy and Natural Resources Committee

Coteau AB Room, State Capitol

SB 2309

3/7/2025

Relating to youth deer hunting permits.
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8:30 a.m. Chairman Porter called the meeting to order.

Members Present: Chairman Porter, Vice Chairman Anderson, Vice Chair Novak,  
Representatives: Dockter, Hagert, Headland, Heinert, Johnson, Marschall, Olson, Ruby,  
Conmy, Foss

### Discussion Topics:

- Whitetail deer youth licenses
- White tail and Mule deer populations

8:30 a.m. Senator Gerhardt introduced the bill and submitted testimony. #39372

8:35 a.m. Rita Goettle, ND Resident, testified in favor and submitted testimony. #39460

8:38 a.m. William Haase, Assistant Wildlife Division Chief, ND Game and Fish Department,  
testified in favor and submitted testimony. #39236

8:40 a.m. Representative Olson moved a Do Pass.

8:40 a.m. Representative Dockter seconded the motion.

Representatives	Vote
Representative Todd Porter	Y
Representative Dick Anderson	Y
Representative Anna Novak	Y
Representative Liz Conmy	Y
Representative Jason Dockter	Y
Representative Austin Foss	Y
Representative Jared c. Hagert	Y
Representative Craig Headland	Y
Representative Pat D. Heinert	Y
Representative Jorin Johnson	Y
Representative Andrew Marschall	Y
Representative Jeremy L. Olson	Y
Representative Matthew Ruby	Y

8:40 a.m. Motion carried: 13-0-0

8:41 a.m. Representative Ruby moved to place on Consent Calendar.

8:41 a.m. Representative Dockter seconded the motion.

8:41 a.m. Voice vote: motion carried.

8:41 a.m. Representative J. Olson will be the carrier.

**Additional written testimony:**

Michael Connelly, ND Resident, submitted testimony in favor.  
#39487

8:41 a.m. Chairman Porter closed the hearing.

*Leah Kuball, Committee Clerk*

**REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE**  
**SB 2309 ([25.1115.02000](#))**

**Energy and Natural Resources Committee (Rep. Porter, Chairman)** recommends **DO PASS** and **BE PLACED ON THE CONSENT CALENDAR** (13 YEAS, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSENT OR EXCUSED AND NOT VOTING). SB 2309 was placed on the Tenth order on the calendar.



House Energy and Natural Resources Committee  
Testimony on SB 2309

North Dakota Game and Fish Department  
Bill Haase, Assistant Wildlife Division Chief  
March 7, 2025

Chairman Porter and members of the House Energy and Natural Resources Committee, my name is Bill Haase, and I serve as the Assistant Wildlife Division Chief for the North Dakota Game and Fish Department (Department). I appreciate the opportunity to testify today in support of SB 2309.

Expanding youth hunting opportunities is a top priority for the Department. In recent years, participation in the antlerless youth gun deer license has steadily increased. Currently, this opportunity is available to youth who turn 11, 12, or 13 in the year of the hunt and is limited to antlerless whitetail deer.

SB 2309 would provide the governor's proclamation with the flexibility to include antlerless mule deer in this season. This change would allow us to expand youth hunting opportunities in units where mule deer populations can support additional harvest.

For these reasons, the Department respectfully urges the committee to issue a "Do Pass" recommendation for SB 2309. Thank you for the opportunity to testify, and I am happy to answer any questions.



# North Dakota Senate

STATE CAPITOL  
600 EAST BOULEVARD  
BISMARCK, ND 58505-0360



## Senator Justin Gerhardt

District 34  
500 Ninth Avenue NW  
Mandan, ND, 58554-2546  
[jgerhardt@ndlegis.gov](mailto:jgerhardt@ndlegis.gov)

## COMMITTEES:

Education  
Energy and Natural Resources

3/7/25

Good morning, Chairman Porter and members of the committee. For the record, Senator Justin Gerhardt serving District 34 in Mandan.

Today you have before you SB 2309. It's good to be here and I'm very excited to present this bill and ask that you give it a do pass so that we can increase the opportunities for youth to have successful and enjoyable hunting experiences in our great state.

SB 2309 is quite simple. Currently, youth ages 11, 12 & 13 in our state are entitled to a statewide antlerless whitetail deer tag. The intent of SB 2309 is to allow for the deer tag, or permit, to also include mule deer.

I've had wonderful opportunities to take three of my 4 kids out hunting for their first deer with the youth whitetail doe tag. We've made great memories and it's set that foundation for their continued interest in hunting. But throughout the past number of years, conversations with other friends of mine have often led to the question, "why whitetail only?" It even led me to call the game and fish department years ago and ask that very question, where the simple answer I was told was that only the legislature could make that sort of change. Looking back, I should have taken that further and contacted one of my legislators, but I didn't. You see, at that time, there were plenty of whitetail in the area, and making a legislative change seemed like something way out of anything I'd ever be able to accomplish. But here we are, years later, and a couple things have changed. The major change is Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease (EHD) which most of us refer to as Blue Tongue, has taken a major major toll on the whitetail population in our area, and by area, I don't think it's incorrect to say, across thousands of square miles.

Four seasons ago, when I took my son on his first hunt, was right about the time EHD swept through the area southwest of Mandan where we typically hunt. He and I made it out one day that season and instead of coming home with a harvest, we came home with covid and crashed on the couch for the next week or two. In the next two hunting seasons we were unable to find an opportunity for him to make his first harvest. We traveled a hundred miles, one way, the opposite direction from where we typically hunt, to try to find some plots land and an opportunity to bag his first deer, but with no success.

Now where we typically hunt, the mule deer have appeared to increase in numbers and increased their territory, I'd assume as they don't have to compete with the white tail that were

once there. We do come across a whitetail now and again, but most hunters are hesitant to shoot them, as we'd like to see their numbers recover.

So, with that, this bill, SB 2309 would give the game and fish department the ability to allow for any antlerless youth tags. It would also allow them to restrict those tags from being filled in units where they might be trying to protect the mule deer population. This was intended to mimic how the 14/15 year old "any" tag currently works, where the game and fish has a restricted tag for certain badlands units so as to best manage the herd in that area.

On a final note, my son was able to make his first deer harvest this past season. He shot a really nice mule buck that rivals some of the best of his mine. I've got pictures I'll proudly share.

Thank you Chairman Porter and committee members. I ask that you give SB 2309 a Do Pass. If you do have any questions for me, I'd be happy to try to answer them.

Testimony of Rita Goettle  
House Energy and Natural Resources Committee  
3-7-25

Chairman Porter and members of the House Energy and Natural Resources Committee. My name is Rita Goettle. I'm speaking today in favor of senate bill 2309.

I have been hunting for the past 2 years with a youth tag. Yet I still have not gotten my first deer. Why is that? Because I have only ever seen about 3 whitetails and they're either too far away for me to shoot or I'm just not in the right spot.

But where I hunt with my dad there are lots of mule deer. Like a lot!! And if I had a tag that allowed me to shoot a mullie, I would have gotten one my first year, and again this year. I've even had one lined up in my scope ready to shoot but just not able to pull the trigger. Multiple times! We were practicing of course so I would know what to do in case I saw a whitetail. But that never happened.

I have learned a lot in the youth hunt, and even saw my dad shoot a deer! A mullie deer, not a whitetail. He also shot buck this year, a mullie buck, not a whitetail buck. But I believe I could have learned more and had a better experience if I could have hunted mullie antlerless as well as whitetail antlerless.

I urge this committee to vote do pass on this bill. And I will be happy to answer any questions. Thank you.

House Energy and Natural Resources Committee Members

Amendment and DO PASS recommendation for SB2309

Please consider adding an amendment where every child is eligible for a deer tag gun license “by right” until the age of 18. Fathers like me only get so many opportunities to empower the love of hunting into our kids. After a kid passes the age of 13, the lotto system often times kids do not get drawn and their interest evaporates.

Mike Connelly

Bismarck Citizen

Please note: This is my testimony, and I am sharing my opinion. I am speaking in no official compacity for any entity or organization.