



To: Honorable Members of the Revenue Committee
State Capitol
1445 K St.
Lincoln, NE 68508

Re: LB 222 – Game and Parks Commission Tax Payments

Position: Oppose

Date: February 11, 2021

Honorable Members of the Revenue Committee:

On behalf of the Congressional Sportsmen’s Foundation (CSF), I ask that you oppose Legislative Bill 222 (LB 222), a bill that would amend the current statute to require the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission (NGPC) to make payments in lieu of taxes (PILTs) for all property ever acquired by the Commission. We request that this letter be included as part of the public hearing record for this bill.

Since 1989, CSF has maintained a singleness of purpose that has guided the organization to become the most respected and trusted sportsmen's organization in the political arena. CSF's mission is to work with Congress, governors, and state legislatures to protect and advance hunting, angling, recreational shooting, and trapping. The unique and collective force of the Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus, the Governors Sportsmen's Caucus, and the National Assembly of Sportsmen's Caucuses, working closely with CSF, and with the support of major hunting, recreational fishing and shooting, and trapping organizations, serves as an unprecedented network of pro-sportsmen elected officials that advance the interests of America's hunters and anglers.

Under current statute, NGPC makes PILTs for all property acquired by the Commission since 1977. While these payments may be important to many counties by offsetting forgone tax revenue for properties acquired by NGPC in those counties, retroactively charging NGPC PILTs from properties that have never required such payments will create an unnecessarily large financial burden on the agency, potentially impacting the NGPC’s ability to meet their public trust obligations to conserve fish and wildlife resources and provide reasonable recreational opportunities for all Nebraskans.

Furthermore, NGPC is largely funded by the sale of hunting and fishing licenses and excise tax revenues generated through the Pittman-Robertson and Dingell-Johnson Acts; a funding mechanism collectively referred to as the American System of Conservation Funding. Nationwide, this System is reliant on participation by members of the sportsmen's community, a user group that has been declining in size since the 1980's. With a lack of access to quality hunting and fishing opportunities widely cited as a primary reason for lapsed participation, providing additional areas for outdoor recreation should be a top priority for NGPC. Unfortunately, LB 222, by requiring PILTs on all properties owned by NGPC and charging a rate based on the highest and best use for each property, would severely impair the Commission's ability to accomplish this objective.

In conclusion, CSF asks the Committee to oppose LB 222, instead maintaining the current system for calculating payments in lieu of taxes paid by NGPC. Doing so will allow the agency to continue to work toward their objectives of providing quality recreational opportunities while successfully managing the Cornhusker State's public trust resources. If you have questions or would like any additional information, please feel free to contact me using the information below.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kent Keene", written in a cursive style.

Kent Keene

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