



Attn: House Committee on Agriculture and Conservation
Re: House Bill 1151
Date: March 6, 2023
Position: Recommend Amendment

Honorable Members of the House Committee on Agriculture and Conservation,

I write you today on behalf of the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation to express a suggested amendment to House Bill 1151, which, as currently written, would significantly decrease revenue from hunting license sales and thereby decrease conservation funding on which the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (DNR) relies. To safeguard the funding that supports the DNR's ability to carry out its function of managing the state's fish and wildlife resources while still offering benefits to nonresident landowners, I respectfully request that the members of this Committee consider amending HB 1151 to lessen this negative impact to conservation funding.

Founded in 1989, the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation (CSF) is the informed authority across outdoor issues and serves as the primary conduit for influencing public policy. Working with the Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus (CSC), the Governors Sportsmen's Caucus (GSC), and the National Assembly of Sportsmen's Caucuses (NASC), CSF gives a voice to hunters, anglers, recreational shooters, and trappers on Capitol Hill and throughout state capitols advocating on vital outdoor issues that are the backbone of our nation's conservation legacy.

The Illinois DNR is supported by the unique "user pays – public benefits" structure of the American System of Conservation Funding (ASCF). Along with excise taxes on outdoor sporting goods, the DNR relies on revenue derived from the sale of hunting and fishing licenses to carry out its function of managing the many fish and wildlife populations of Illinois. HB 1151 would remove the residency requirement from the landowner deer, turkey, and combination licenses, meaning that nonresidents owning at least 40 acres of land in the State would not be required to purchase such licenses.

While the revenue implications of issuing more free licenses are obvious, what is less known is the impact of license exemptions on the ability of the DNR to fully claim its portion of revenue made available through the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration (Pittman-Robertson) Act. In making apportionments of this funding, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service uses a formula¹ that, in part, considers the number of eligible hunting and fishing licenses sold. To be counted, licenses not only need to be required, but must also result in revenue collected by the state fish and wildlife management agency (i.e., Illinois DNR). Free licenses, like those that would be offered under this bill, would not count towards this funding.

¹ Congressional Research Service. April 5, 2019. Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act: Understanding Apportionments for States and Territories. Accessed: March 6, 2023. <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/misc/R45667.pdf>

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We therefore recommend that, for the Legislature to achieve the bill's intention of offering benefits to nonresident landowners, HB 1151 be amended to instead offer these nonresident landowners of at least 40 acres the ability to purchase hunting licenses at the resident rate. This approach has been successful in other states when offering benefits to nonresident college students.² Nonresident landowners may thereby realize benefits for owning and maintaining larger properties and contributing to the state through property taxes, while the DNR does not lose as significant an amount of funding from a reduction in licenses sold, and therefore fewer federal funds dispersed to the state for the purpose of wildlife management.

I respectfully urge the members of this Committee to consider and implement this amendment to HB 1151. As written, this bill stands to harm the DNR's ability to properly manage the fish and wildlife populations of Illinois by reducing the ASCF revenue realized by the department. I thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony and welcome any questions you may have.

Sincerely,



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² Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation. College Student Hunting/Angling Licenses. Accessed March 6, 2023.
<https://congressionalsportsmen.org/policy/college-student-hunting-angling-licenses/>