



To: Natural Resource Committee
1445 K St.
Lincoln, NE 68508

Re: **Legislative Bill 826** – Provide for combination fishing, fur-harvesting, and hunting permits and stamps and state park entry permits for resident and nonresident veterans and active duty personnel.

Legislative Bill 1036 – Provide for free issuance of annual combination fishing, fur-harvesting, and hunting permits, habitat stamps, and Nebraska migratory waterfowl stamps to certain veterans.

Position: Recommended Amendments

Date: January 23, 2024

Honorable Members of the Natural Resources Committee,

On behalf of the Congressional Sportsmen’s Foundation (CSF), I respectfully urge you to consider amendments to Legislative Bill 826 (LB 826) and Legislative Bill 1036 (LB 1036) that are designed to preserve the integrity of the “user pays – public benefits” American System of Conservation Funding (ASCF). While CSF appreciates opportunities to show support for those who have served our nation as members of the armed forces, there are considerations associated with the provision of discounted and no-cost hunting and fishing licenses that must be taken into account to ensure the future success of hunter and angler supported conservation efforts in Nebraska.

Founded in 1989, 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.

Funded by the sale of hunting and fishing licenses, along with revenue generated from self-imposed excise taxes through the Pittman-Robertson Act and Dingell-Johnson Act with Wallop-Breaux Amendments, the ASCF serves as one of the primary sources of revenue for the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission’s (NGPC) fish and wildlife conservation efforts. While the implications of discounted or no-cost licenses, as outlined in LB 826 and LB 1036, on license revenue are obvious, what is less known is the impact of no-cost licenses, such as those described in LB 1036, on the ability of the NGPC to fully claim their portion of revenue made available through the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration (Pittman-Robertson) and Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration (Dingell-Johnson) Acts. In making apportionments of Pittman-Robertson and Dingell-Johnson Funds, the United States Fish and Wildlife Services uses a formula¹ that, in part, considers the number of eligible hunting (Pittman-Robertson) and fishing (Dingell-Johnson)

¹ Congressional Research Service April 5, 2019. Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act Understanding Apportionments for States and Territories. Accessed: January 16, 2024. <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/misc/R45667.pdf>

licenses sold. To be counted, licenses not only need to be obtained by each hunter or angler but must also result in revenue collected by the state fish and wildlife management agency (i.e., NGPC). In turn, each certified hunting license results in, approximately, an additional \$26 and each fishing license brings in \$10 of federal aid.

While CSF understands the desire to provide benefits for veterans, such as those described in LB 826 and LB 1036, we respectfully ask the Committee to consider amending one or both of the bills to also include specific language that creates a reimbursement² to NGPC from the state general fund for any license or permit revenue forgone as a result of this and any other free or discounted license or permit provided by the Legislature going forward. In doing so, the Legislature will retain the opportunity to provide these incentives or rewards to deserving demographics without threatening the ability of NGPC to receive the funding necessary to continue their work of managing Nebraska's public trust fish and wildlife resources for the benefit of all Nebraskans. Examples of this framework already exist in other states, such as Tennessee (see example below), where discounts are granted by the legislature. Given NGPC's reliance on the ASCF, we believe that these amendments would be a valuable addition in the Cornhusker State.

Tennessee Title 70, Chapter 2 § 70-2-104: "The agency shall be reimbursed for lost revenue resulting from the issuance of free or partially discounted combination hunting and fishing licenses created by statute on or after January 1, 2017, in an amount equal to the discounts received."

To conclude, CSF recognizes the sacrifices made by those who served in our nation's armed forces. However, we maintain that discounted and no-cost licenses carry potentially significant negative impacts for NGPC. Should the Legislature determine that the issuance of discounted and no-cost license be necessary, we recommend amending LB 826, LB 1036, or both to include the aforementioned reimbursement language to ensure the integrity of the ASCF is maintained. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this issue. Should you require additional information on this, or other sportsmen-related topics, please feel free to contact me at any time.

Sincerely,



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² Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation. 2024. Reimbursement to Fish and Wildlife Agencies for Free and Discounted Licenses. Accessed: January 16, 2024. <https://congressionalsportsmen.org/policy/reimbursement-to-fish-and-wildlife-agencies-for-free-and-discounted-licenses/>