

**From:** Mark Richards

**Sent:** Wednesday, March 26, 2014 1:54 PM

**Cc:** Sen. Cathy Giessel; Sen. Fred Dyson; Sen. Peter Micciche; Sen. Click Bishop; Sen. Lesil McGuire; Sen. Anna Fairclough; Sen. Hollis French

**Subject:** Additional Comments on HB 161

Dear Chair Giessel and Committee members,

You already have the letter Alaska Backcountry Hunters & Anglers sent in opposing HB 161. I would like to offer additional comments after listening to the invitation-only testimony on March 21st, and hopefully they can be put in the document packet.

**Use of Helicopters and conducting these Governor tag hunts out of season:**

- When Rep Gattis or anyone else tells the committee that the use of helicopters, or holding these hunts out of season, will not be allowed in accord with this bill, that is simply not true. The only way we can positively say that a helicopter will not be allowed to be used for transportation under one of these Governor tag hunts, or that a hunt won't be conducted outside of normal seasons, is if we reinstate language (that was removed from original statute) that these hunts must be conducted according to "applicable law." This legislation if passed would carry on far beyond the current administration and current ADFG leadership positions. No one can say truthfully that in the future the use of helicopters or holding these hunts out of season will not happen. For what other reason was "applicable law" language struck from the original statute? That's the question no one has yet asked proponents of the bill. At minimum we urge you to reinstate the "applicable law" language.

**Increasing funding to the Division of Wildlife Conservation, and fiscal costs not listed in this bill:**

- There seems to be confusion over just how much this legislation would actually increase funding to DWC, and how much it may cost to implement. There should be a fiscal note attached to this legislation. HB 161 also should go through the Senate Finance committee for further study and input on the true costs involved, both positive and negative. An evaluation needs to be made on how to better align any increased revenues with the matching 3:1 Pittman-Robertson funds. If, for example, a governor permit under this legislation auctions for \$200,000 dollars, and the organization is allowed to keep 100% of that profit to be used in coordination with the Department, there are no assurances that the projects carried out with those monies will be eligible for matching P-R funds. There are also no assurances those monies won't be used for administrative and other expenses, hiring more staff, nor is there any way we can see for the Department or another entity to fully audit where those monies are going.

**What pool of permits do the increased Governor permits come from, and how does this affect resident opportunity?:**

- When Rep. Gattis testified before the committee on March 21st, she said: *"Permits occupied by the Governor's license program are taken out of the draw hunt. The program does not take permits directly from Alaskan hunters. When a resident hunter enters into the drawing for most hunts, that person has the same chance of winning a permit as a nonresident hunter."* This statement shows a clear lack of understanding of how our draw permit system works. The most coveted draw hunts residents apply for are Kodiak brown bear and Dall sheep permits. For those hunts, there are separate drawings for resident and non-resident hunters. In every instance where these draw permit hunts have differing hunt numbers and draws based on residency, nonresidents have a much higher chance of drawing a permit than residents. Nowhere in this legislation does it state that the additional allocation of Governor permits will come only from the nonresident pool of permits. For example, if the new donated Dall sheep permit will be for a sheep hunt in the Unit 13D/14A areas where it is draw only for both residents and nonresidents,

and it is auctioned to a nonresident hunter, is that one less permit taken from the nonresident or resident pool? At minimum this should be clarified in the bill and stipulated that these additional permits **do not** come out of the resident pool of permits. Otherwise, the statement that this program does not take permits directly from Alaskan hunters is false.

**There is a better way to fund DWC and sportsmen's organizations:**

- As we stated in our previous letter, Alaska Backcountry Hunters & Anglers has been proposing a hunting license/tag fee increase since 2008. That is the fairest and most sensible way to increase funding to the Department, that would be eligible for the matching 3:1 Pittman-Robertson federal funds. It is unfortunate that we can't get legislators to support such an increase at this time. One compromise on this bill would be to eliminate the additional permit allocations and retain the language that allows organizations to keep more of the profits. During House hearings on HB 161, it was asked if non-profit organizations supporting this bill would accept raising the profits they could retain according to the legislation, without additional governor permits being allocated. The answer was yes.

In closing, we still do not support HB 161. It is unfortunate that this legislation has the hunting community split. We urge Senators to weigh this more closely and at least think of compromises that can be made to make this a better package.

Sincerely

Mark Richards

co-Chair Alaska chapter Backcountry Hunters & Anglers