

APHA Letter of Support 3/13/17

Subject: HB 87

Dear House Resource Committee Members,

I'm writing on behalf of my client the Alaska Professional Hunters Association.

Alaska Professional Hunters Association's (APHA) board of directors met this morning and considered their position on HB 87. The following headings and brief explanations address various aspects of their current position RE: HB 87.

Interest/Standing:

APHA is an association of professional hunting guides who has been active since 1972. APHA's members rely on fair allocation of big game hunting opportunities for their livelihoods. Historically hunting guides have been appointed to the Board of Game. Registered guide Nathan Turner (Nenanna) sits on the Board of Game at this time.

APHA is supportive of clear statutory guidelines that address potential financial conflict where a public service could be used to financially benefit an individual board member or their family.

Board of Game vs. Board of Fish

APHA opposes removing the BOG from HB87 thereby treating the BOG differently than the BOF. Removing the BOG from HB87 will eventually have the result of the courts deciding that the legislature has made a statement of policy to be more restrictive on the BOG than the BOF. The original statutes treated both boards the same, we would like that policy to continue.

Conservation:

APHA is first and foremost interested in the effects of any change to the BOG that would undercut its effectiveness at addressing conservation concerns.

APHA can see a benefit to conservation discussion and record building by allowing a board member to deliberate on a proposal where they have a financial interest. A financial interest often translates into knowledge of the resource in question. Members of the public are asked to be knowledgeable about wildlife as a pre-requisite to appointment to the BOG and the BOF.

APHA is concerned that allowing a board member to vote on a proposal could elevate financial gain as motive or disincentives conservation based restrictions. APHA's concerns are not leveled at hunting guides in particular but generally where financial interests are concerned (transporters, photographers, etc.).

Public Trust:

Clearly public trust in the BOG will be undercut if members with financial conflicts are allowed to vote on proposals. APHA is opposed to measures that undercut the public's trust in vital institutions such as the BOG or BOF.

APHA would suggest that requiring conflicted BOG members to sit through deliberations could enhance the public's trust in the board process. This is suggested based on the public having a chance for a board member to go on the record where their interests are concerned. This will minimize frivolous accusations of improper influence "behind the scenes" by requiring participation in the deliberative process. APHA sees this as the core policy call to be made on HB87 and is supportive of thorough vetting of this matter.

APHA would be opposed to HB87 if it becomes clear that the public's trust will somehow be compromised by allowing conflicted members to deliberate or participate in board discussions.

Interests With Financial Interest- Board of Game

What follows is a short list of some interests that have financial conflicts while sitting on the Board of Game. Hunting guides are merely one user group with specific conflicts.

- Transporters
- Hunting Guides
- Wildlife Photographers
- Outdoor Gear Manufacturers
- Trappers
- Sporting Goods Store Owners
- Tour Operators
- Private Landowners
- Hunt Planners

Summary:

APHA appreciates the discussion that surrounds HB87. If the committee feels HB87 offers a long-term benefit to resource conservation, while maintaining the public's trust in the board process, we ask that you move it forward in the legislative process.

Thor Stacey

(907) 723 1494