



March 20, 2021

RE: AKWSF Support for HB 128

Honorable Members of the House Finance Committee:

Alaska Wild Sheep Foundation (AK WSF) offers the following comments in support of HB 128.

AK WSF is an Alaska non-profit 501(c) (3) corporation with the mission of supporting conservation of wild sheep, Rocky Mountain goats and muskoxen (Caprinae) in Alaska. Twenty-five percent of all the wild sheep in North America live in Alaska making the 49th state's wild population an international treasure. All of Alaska's wild sheep populations are naturally occurring in large intact contiguous habitats. Rocky Mountain goats in Alaska are a mix of naturally occurring and transplanted populations. All muskox in Alaska are part of reintroduced population in areas where they occurred naturally before being extirpated before the turn of the 20th century.

AK WSF routinely partners with ADFG to promote wise conservation practices for all three species of Caprinae for the benefit of Alaskans by directly contributing to ADFG's wildlife conservation fund. AK WSF and our parent organization, WSF, have directly contributed over \$2M to ADFG. These contributions qualified for federal Pittman/Roberson match at a 3:1 ratio for a total financial benefit to Alaska of over \$8M. These funds by law cannot be dedicated to only Caprinae research and management so they benefited all Alaskan species. Our total contribution in 2020 of \$120K was especially important as ADFG experienced revenue shortfalls due to a reduced number of non-resident hunters traveling to Alaska during the pandemic.

AK WSF's has historically relied on strong in-state fundraising efforts with a large percentage of funds being raised using raffles operated under Alaska's charitable gaming rules. In addition to these raffles, we also rely on Governor's tags awarded to AK WSF to auction to either residents or non-residents. Non-Alaskan participation in the auction program has always raised significant revenue for wildlife management in Alaska. Expansion of our raffle programs to include the non-Alaskan sportsman's community would increase the revenue in that area exponentially.

Before the pandemic AK WSF hosted the largest in person wildlife conservation banquets in the state. In 2020 the COVID-19 pandemic forced AK WSF to adapt and develop alternative strategies to raise money to continue our mission. The legislature's disaster declaration and subsequent extensions allowed for online sales of raffle tickets, these online sales were critical to our ability to carrying on when large in person events were simply not safe or feasible. Suddenly Alaskan's who previously felt left out were included by being able to purchase tickets online. Including more Alaskans in the effort to raise money for wildlife conservation is something we view as a significant success.

Alaskan sportsmen and women often purchase raffle tickets online from non-Alaskan non-profits for contests being held in other states. Conversely, Alaska's charitable gaming statutes prohibit our non-profits from selling raffle ticket online outside of Alaska. HB128 as currently drafted would continue to explicitly prohibit out-of-state sales and place the liability to prove the legality of raffle ticket purchases on the charitable organization conducting the raffle. We would like the legislature to put Alaskan non-profits on even footing with non-profits in other states.

AK WSF suggests the following changes to HB 128:

- Eliminate the requirement for a purchaser to be a resident of the State of Alaska
- Eliminate the requirement that the raffle licensee verify the age and location of the purchaser
- Eliminate the prohibition on sales to people located out of state
- For internet sales, the purchaser (and not licensee) will verify:
 - That the individual is of legal age to purchase the raffle ticket
 - That the individual resides in a state where the purchase of a raffle ticket is not prohibited

Clarify that any such raffle governed by this bill occurs within the state of Alaska and the winner is determined within the State of Alaska.

Sincerely



Kevin J Kehoe
President
Alaska Wild Sheep Foundation
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