

Members of the Senate Resource Committee,

My name is Brian Mason. I am a lifelong Alaskan resident, an avid hunter who provides the substantial majority of my family's protein intake from wild sources, and the website administrator for Alaska Outdoors Directory. As the largest website on the internet focused on Alaskan Hunting, I am in a unique position to observe trends and public sentiment on a variety of issues that affect Alaskan hunters. To put it succinctly, there is much concern among Alaskan resident hunters about HB 161. While its stated goals are laudable, as the details of the bill have emerged and been debated it has become increasingly clear that this will potentially harm both resident opportunity and funding for ADF&G while also raising Constitutional issues.

Opportunity: In early statements in support of HB 161 it was claimed that this bill would not reduce resident opportunity. This was later clarified to state that the reduction in opportunity would be small and that since residents and non-residents have equal chance in the drawing for coveted permits, the reduction in opportunity would be borne equally by all hunters. This is patently untrue for many of the hunts from which permits will be reallocated by HB 161. While residents and non-residents may apply for the same hunt areas, for sheep and brown bear they are most often separated into separate pools for the drawing. The resident and non-resident applications are given different hunt numbers, and each hunt number has its own fixed allocation. In all cases, the result is that non-resident applicants already have far higher odds of drawing a permit under current law, as there are fewer applicants per permit. Under HB 161, it is not stated where the allocation will come from when permits are awarded to organizations for auction/raffle. For example, if an organization were awarded a hunt from Ship Creek in 14C and the permit was thereafter purchased by a non-resident, would the allocation be reduced from the resident pool (hunt DS 136), or from the non-resident pool (hunt DS 236)? Given that only a single non-resident tag is allocated for this area for each season, it is hard to imagine that the non-resident allocation in the drawing would be zeroed out. As such, the residents of Alaska would bear the reduction in opportunity. Even though that reduction would only directly affect one hunter per permit allocated, it is hard to argue that such a reduction is insignificant for these most treasured of once-in-a-lifetime opportunities. Simply put, we're being asked as residents of Alaska to sell our own chances at hunting in the state in which we live for a very uncertain, loosely defined potential benefit.

Funding: There are two issues of concern here – how best to fund ADF&G's mission and whether this bill will in fact increase funding for the Department. With regards to ADF&G funding, I strongly believe that we need to pay our own way through a nominal increase to license fees and a small per-tag fee on harvest tickets. The State of Alaska has not increased our license fees since 1993. In the meantime, the consumer price index has increased substantially. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the current license fee of \$25 in 1993 dollars would need to be replaced

by \$40.62 today to have similar purchasing power. Needless to say, our Department cannot be expected to be able to do the same work year after year when their funding from license and tag fees has not kept pace with inflation. We can easily address this by raising our non-resident fees to match those of other Western states (we currently are significantly cheaper than other states with huntable sheep, goat, and moose populations) and by contributing a small amount as residents. After all, part of the Alaskan ethic is taking responsibility for our own needs – in this case we have been sorely derelict.

More specific to HB 161, it is far from certain that it will result in increased funding to ADF&G. Beyond increasing the amount that organizations can keep for expenses (from 10 to 30%), this bill increases the supply of permits substantially. This will almost certainly reduce price, as with increased supply there will be less incentive to outbid the small amount of competitors for such permits. The price per permit will almost certainly fall, and coupled with the reduction in the percentage kept by ADF&G, the overall result could very well be reduced funding for wildlife management rather than the increase sought by HB 161,

Constitutional Issues: As noted in the HB 161 legal memo 20140328 posted on the Legislature's website, this bill also raises substantial Constitutional concerns. I won't restate these in detail here, but upon review of the legal memo it is clear that there is reason to believe that the Constitution's Equal Protection, Common Use, and Uniform Application clauses will be violated by HB 161.

I urge members of the Resource Committee to deny passage of HB 161. While its goals are laudable, the details will actually harm resident opportunity while falling short of its aim of increasing funding to ADF&G. There are other means for adequately funding our Department, and I encourage you to explore those options in the future. Thank you.

-Brian Mason
Eagle River, Alaska