



unapologetically **FOR ALASKAN RESIDENTS**

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April 7, 2022

To: Senate Resources Committee

Re: Board of Game appointments/reappointment

Dear Chairman Revak and members of the Senate Resources committee,

The Board of Game is a seven-member panel that determines all regional and statewide hunting regulations, to include allocations between different user groups, seasons and bag limits, and methods and means of hunting.

It is imperative that the Board of Game be balanced and fairly represent all Alaskans. AS 16.05.221, the statute that governs Boards of Fisheries and Game appointments, speaks to the need to provide a balanced membership: "The governor shall appoint each member on the basis of interest in public affairs, good judgment, knowledge, and ability in the field of action of the board, **and with a view to providing diversity of interest and points of view in the membership.**" [my emphasis]

The current 3 appointments/reappointment to the Board of Game (James Cooney, Ruth Cusack, and Al Barrette) are all licensed hunting guides. If confirmed, there would then be 5 guides on the seven-member board.

While we certainly believe that all of the individuals appointed or reappointed to the Board of Game are qualified to serve, we must **oppose** any more guides on the Board of Game, regardless of class of their guide license, as it clearly does not provide a diversity of interest and points of view and unbalances the board in favor of commercial hunting interests.

We have communicated to all of the appointees our position, and in no way is our position meant to question their integrity or character or qualifications. This is purely about adhering to the statute governing diversity of interests and points of view on the Board of Game.

We have always made recommendations to the Governor and Boards and Commissions regarding Board of Game appointments, and currently we have three individuals whom we've recommended. One has served on the board in the past, one is a retired wildlife trooper who served as trooper liaison to the Board of Game, and the other is a resident hunter who has served on his local Fish and Game Advisory Committee for several years. None of these individuals holds a guide license.

We brought up our opposition to more guides on the Board of Game during the last session when the Governor appointed two new guides to the board, both of whom were confirmed and are now serving. We believe the statutory structure of the Boards of Fisheries and Game needs

to be revisited by the legislature. For several years now the legislature has been using their own non-statutory guidelines for appointments to both boards, such as certain designated seats on the Board of Fisheries, and regional representation on the Board of Game. The legislature has been clear that they want commercial fishing interests to be represented on the Board of Fisheries, hence the two de facto commercial-fishing-interest seats on Board of Fisheries. Regarding commercial hunting interests on the Board of Game, we are disappointed that the legislature has been willing to confirm so many guides to the Board of Game, while making clear they don't believe there should be more than two seats on the Board of Fisheries representing commercial fishing interests.

There are some 100,000 Alaskan residents who purchase a hunting license and contribute more than a billion dollars to the economy annually. Less than 1 percent of those resident hunters are licensed guides, who overwhelmingly cater to and guide nonresident hunters in the commercial hunting industry.

Certainly, it makes sense to have a licensed guide on the Board of Game to represent commercial hunting interests. It makes no sense at all, though, to have guides make up a majority of the board membership.

RHAK has an overview and history of the Board of Game and process available on our website that I highly recommend reading; it provides more context to our position and information on why we believe the statutory structure of the Board of Game should be revisited. You can find it at this link: <https://www.residenthuntersofalaska.org/boardofgame>

Respectfully,

Mark Richards

Executive Director Resident Hunters of Alaska (RHAK)