

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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Senate Bill 204 - Sponsor Statement Version W

"An Act relating to auctions or raffles for hunting harvest permits and big game tags; and providing for an effective date."

Since its passage in the 1997, the Governor's Auction and Raffle Tag program has successfully and substantially increased funding for the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G). In 2021, gross revenue was just over \$1.2 million. SB 204 seeks to build on this success and expand the department's ability to bring in revenue, which will support wildlife conservation and protection programs and education across Alaska.

Foundationally, Senate Bill 204 adds three species to the available harvest permit list and standardizes the number of game harvest permits that ADF&G grants each year to qualified organizations for fundraising auctions or raffles. By doing so, the department will have the flexibility to issue *up to* four permits for each species, taking into account the health of the game population and recommendations of department biologists when determining the actual number that will be issued each year.

The increased revenue from this moderate expansion of available harvest permits will ensure two important outcomes. First, it allows the department to maintain sufficient funds to continue critical conservation and wildlife protection measures that have been the mainstay of wildlife management for decades. Second, with the large increase in firearms and ammunition sales and approximately \$18 million in new Pittman-Robertson (PR) grants coming our way, ADF&G will need sufficient matching dollars to prevent these new PR funds from reverting back to the federal government.

Modern, effective wildlife management is becoming more expensive. For example, an increase of a couple of dollars to aviation fuel has a major impact on survey and inventory operations which, in turn, are a key element in setting game population and harvest objectives. Without accurate objectives, for instance, the Board of Game cannot make well-informed decisions on yearly hunting seasons and bag limits.

In sum, SB 204 will allow more federal revenue to be leveraged for critical sustainable wildlife education and management programs and the proactive work needed to prevent new listings under the Endangered Species Act. Senate Bill 204 directly supports sustainable wildlife populations, outdoor traditions, hunters, and outdoor recreation users.