

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE RESOURCES STANDING COMMITTEE**

January 26, 2024

1:03 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Tom McKay, Chair
Representative George Rauscher, Vice Chair
Representative Thomas Baker
Representative Kevin McCabe
Representative Dan Saddler
Representative Stanley Wright
Representative Jennie Armstrong
Representative Donna Mears
Representative Maxine Dibert

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

HOUSE BILL NO. 243

"An Act reducing the draw permit application fee for bison to \$5; and providing for an effective date."

- HEARD & HELD

HOUSE BILL NO. 201

"An Act changing the residency requirements for hunting, trapping, and sport fishing privileges; and providing for an effective date."

- HEARD & HELD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: HB 243

SHORT TITLE: BISON DRAW PERMIT APPLICATION FEE

SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) CRONK

01/16/24	(H)	PREFILE RELEASED 1/8/24
01/16/24	(H)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/16/24	(H)	RES
01/24/24	(H)	RES AT 1:00 PM BARNES 124
01/24/24	(H)	Heard & Held

01/24/24 (H) MINUTE (RES)
01/26/24 (H) RES AT 1:00 PM BARNES 124

BILL: HB 201

SHORT TITLE: RESIDENCY REQ: HUNTING, TRAPPING, FISHING
SPONSOR(s): REPRESENTATIVE(s) HIMSCHOOT

05/11/23 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
05/11/23 (H) RES, JUD
01/24/24 (H) RES AT 1:00 PM BARNES 124
01/24/24 (H) Heard & Held
01/24/24 (H) MINUTE (RES)
01/26/24 (H) RES AT 1:00 PM BARNES 124

WITNESS REGISTER

DON QUARBERG, representing self
Delta Junction, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 243.

VERNON AITON, representing self
Delta Junction, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified during the hearing on HB 243.

TISHA KENNEL, representing self
Delta Junction, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 243.

DAVID EGELSEON, representing self
Thorne Bay, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 201.

STUART EDDY, representing self
Petersburg, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 201.

KENT BARKHAU, representing self
Sitka, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 201.

JAKE COMBS, representing self
Tok, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified during the hearing on HB 243.

JIM BRENNAN, representing self
Sitka, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in opposition to HB 201.

TAD FUJIOKA, representing self
Sitka, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 201.

LEWIS HIATT, representing self
Hollis, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 201.

PAUL JOHNSON, representing self
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 201.

MATT BECK, representing self
Whale Pass, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 201.

CHET POWELL, representing self
Craig, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 201.

JOEY EDMUNDS, representing self
Tok, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 201.

THOMAS HARDEN, representing self
Hollis, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 201.

SEAN DAVIS, representing self
(No address provided)

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 201.

KEVIN CASTLE, representing self
Craig, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 201.

DENNIS NICKERSON, Tribal President
Klawock Cooperative Association Tribe;
Chair

Klawock Fish and Game Advisory Committee
Klawock, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 201.

LARRY RIVERS, representing self
Talkeetna, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 201.

ELLEN HANNAN, representing self
Craig, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of HB 201.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[1:03:16 PM](#)

CHAIR TOM MCKAY called the House Resources Standing Committee meeting to order at 1:03 p.m. Representatives Rauscher, Baker, McCabe, Saddler, Wright, Armstrong, Mears, Dibert, and McKay were present at the call to order.

HB 243-BISON DRAW PERMIT APPLICATION FEE

[1:04:23 PM](#)

CHAIR MCKAY announced that the first order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 243, "An Act reducing the draw permit application fee for bison to \$5; and providing for an effective date."

[1:04:29 PM](#)

CHAIR MCKAY opened public testimony on HB 243.

[1:05:11 PM](#)

DON QUARBERG, representing self, testified in support of HB 243 as a former member of the Delta Bison Working Group and 40 years of experience working with the Delta Fish & Game Advisory Committee. He explained the bison range funding by the Alaska State Legislature for the purpose of providing adequate shelter and water through October of each year. He reported that in 1984, the fee to hunt bison was increased by \$5 to supplement the existing funds. Those funds were never allocated to the Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G). He stated that ADF&G increased the number of permit applications in 2017 which caused a spike in the number of hunters. He claimed there is a missing \$170,000 that is designated for bison management. He described the seasonal round of the bison which only spend a month of the year on the range then move to farmland. He exclaimed ADF&G has absconded with those funds, which is unacceptable.

[1:08:44 PM](#)

VERNON AITON, representing self, identified himself as a former ADF&G Board member for over 20 years and former president of the Delta Sportsman's Association. He stated the bottom line is hunters have paid the extra fee for years but did not get what they paid for. He cautioned the price of the lost fees will probably never be known but the matching Pitman-Robertson [Act] funds have been spent as intended. He favored reassembling the Delta Bison Oversight Committee but not under the auspices of ADF&G. He urged for the bison range to be increased. He is also in favor of a Delta bison feeding program as a contingency plan.

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TISHA KENNEL, representing self, said she has witnessed incompetence and unethical management of bison. She stated that the original purpose of the \$5 addition was to better manage the herd on the bison range. She stated the bison range money has essentially been stolen from the local communities. She cited the bison range manager said he did not need additional monies during the 2020-2021 starvation years and would not know what to do with the funds. She cited several mistakes that the state has made managing the herd. She said other states have established successful hunts during starvation events. She informed the committee that local residents have come together to hire an outside entity to manage the herd because they do not trust ADG&G to manage their wildlife or additional funding. She intended to send a message to the public that Delta Junction does not trust ADF&G and can better serve the game management in the region. She finished by stating her support for HB 243.

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CHAIR MCKAY asked the previous testifiers how the money would be spent to support the bison range.

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MR. QUARBERG recounted there were initially 90,000 acres granted for the bison range and the legislature gave [ADF&G] \$1.54 million to clear 3,000 acres for habitat development. He insisted that the Pitman-Robertson [Act] Fund could have helped the situation. In response to a follow-up question, he explained that the Pitman-Robertson [Act] Fund derives from a nationwide sales tax on firearms and ammunition.

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REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE interjected that if the state does not use those funds then the funds will be lost.

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REPRESENTATIVE SADDLER asked the three testifiers if reconvening a working group would be a sufficient response to the issue.

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DON QUARBERG responded that there needs to be a local advisory council other than ADF&G. In response to a follow-up question, he explained that the previous Bison Working Group was composed of 11 or 12 people, one of which was from Florida and did not understand the issue. He said that the working group did come to a consensus on how to manage the range but that plan has been lost since the group has disbanded. He affirmed that it would be beneficial to reconvene the working group.

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MS. KENNELL interjected that there have been concerns about the oversight of the funds to make sure it is being spent properly and managed properly.

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REPRESENTATIVE BAKER urged the committee to look into the Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group for comparison. He said the group is composed of locals that receive input from ADF&G and federal agencies and is a good example for the Delta Bison Range Working Group.

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REPRESENTATIVE RAUSCHER, as co-sponsor, made a closing statement and thanked the committee for considering HB 243.

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CHAIR MCKAY closed public testimony on HB 243.

CHAIR MCKAY announced that HB 243 was held over.

HB 201-RESIDENCY REQ: HUNTING, TRAPPING, FISHING

[1:24:10 PM](#)

CHAIR MCKAY announced that the final order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 201, "An Act changing the residency requirements for hunting, trapping, and sport fishing privileges; and providing for an effective date."

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CHAIR MCKAY opened public testimony on HB 201 and asked if Representative Himschoot would please remain available for questions.

[1:25:20 PM](#)

DAVID EGELSEON, representing self, identified as a retired New York State Trooper with 30 years of experience. He also said he is a current member of the East Prince of Wales Advisory Committee. He said he fully supported HB 201 and thanked Representative Himschoot and staff for crafting the legislation. He provided an example from Thorne Bay, where there are hunters and fishers that live on the island only 2-4 months of the year and are not legal residents. He continued that these fake residents also go north to hunt caribou, sheep, goats, and brown [grizzly] bears. He stated he has lived in Alaska only 12 years but intends to stay. He held a strong belief that the resources are essential to residents first before sharing them with outsiders. He urged the committee to require non-residents to pay for the privilege to hunt and fish in Alaska the way Alaska residents do. He said the requirements are too low for residency status.

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STUART EDDY, representing self, testified in support of HB 201 as a fourth-generation Alaskan, commercial fisherman, and hunting guide. He opined that the current hunting, fishing, and trapping requirements are too lenient, and those resources are being taken advantage of. He cited that the state is losing money from the Pittman-Robertson [Act] and Dingell-Johnson Act. He advocated for HB 201 as a tool for law enforcement and citizens.

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KENT BARKHAU, representing self, testified in support of HB 201. From his perspective, he said, it is a privilege to hunt and

fish in Alaska. He cited the requirements to hunt, fish, and trap should be the same as the permanent fund dividend (PFD) requirements. He advocated for HB 201 as well as the Sitka Fish and Game Advisory Council.

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JAKE COMBS, representing self, testified in full support of HB 201 because it would ensure the residents access to what they need to hunt, fish, and trap. He advocated for a six-month residency standard. He said the privilege of hunting and fishing far outweighs the amount of the PFD and objected to the current requirement for a non-resident hunting and fishing license. He concluded that non-residents should not be able to take fish and game out of state without paying a fee.

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JIM BRENNAN, representing self, said he opposed HB 201 because it would penalize bona fide residents such as himself. He lives in both Washington and Alaska but does not receive the PFD because he is not eligible. He said he regarded himself as an Alaskan and there are better ways to mitigate the problem other than HB 201.

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TAD FUJIOKA, representing self, spoke in support of HB 201 as a fourth-generation Alaskan. He emphasized HB 201 would help the Alaska Wildlife Troopers, ADF&G, and residents.

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LEWIS HIATT, representing self, testified in support of HB 201. He urged the committee to better define the term "resident" with an example of a California couple that fish halibut, crab, and shrimp claiming resident status but ship it to the Lower 48. He expressed concern for his children that still rely on Alaska's resources.

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PAUL JOHNSON, representing self, testified in support of HB 201 and described what it was like before statehood. He said the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) created a loophole for non-residents to claim residency on federal lands and HB 201 would close that loophole.

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MATT BECK, representing self, testified that he had purchased a non-resident hunting and fishing license and subsequently became a resident. He stressed that out-of-state visitors are taking Alaska's resources and do not give back to the communities in which they hunt and fish. He stressed the cost of groceries is rising and resources are declining and difficult to get access to for residents. He cited the Pitman-Robertson Act as a means to obtain additional funds for ADF&G.

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CHET POWELL, representing self, testified in support of HB 201 because the residency requirement is too easy to obtain. He urged the committee to synchronize the PFD and hunting and fishing requirements.

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JOEY EDMUNDS, representing self, testified that she was in support of HB 201 because the current requirements for Alaska residency should be stricter. She said non-residents create a greater [hunting/fishing] pressure. She opined that the residency standard is negatively affecting revenue for ADF&G.

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THOMAS HARDEN, representing self, testified in support of HB 201 because it makes sense and assists with law enforcement. Seasonal workers take many of the resources with no intention of living in the state. He contended that Alaska needs higher standards. He advocated for the Pittman-Robertson Act which raises money for conservation issues.

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SEAN DAVIS, representing self, testified in support of HB 201 due to the hunting and fishing pressure from non-residents. He said mirroring the PFD requirement would help measure a system that is already in place.

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KEVIN CASTLE, representing self, testified in support of HB 201 because summer visitors setting halibut skates exploit that

resource. He suggested more restrictive requirements for residency.

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DENNIS NICKERSON, Tribal President, Klawock Cooperative Association Tribe; Chair, Klawock Fish and Game Advisory Committee, testified that the Klawock Tribe supported HB 201 specifically for the hunting, fishing, and trapping clause. He felt residents are threatened by non-residents hunters and fishers. He advocated for a balanced approach to harvesting fish and game throughout the year. He said the tribe also continues with the traditional barter system to share with those in need. He stated that food security is as high as it's ever been and non-residents have been exploiting Prince of Wales Island for a long time. He stated that salmon have been depleted by out-of-state fishers and thanked the sponsor of HB 201, Representative Himschoot.

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LARRY RIVERS, representing self, testified in support of HB 201. He claimed the residency requirement is too loose and difficult to enforce. He said he has seen people stay in Alaska for a couple months, get a post office box, and leave the state but still claim residency. He insisted that the six-month residency is far too lenient and suggest it be changed to eight or ten months for residency status.

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ELLEN HANNAN, representing self, identified herself as a lifelong resident of Alaska and said HB 201 would close the loophole on residency status by tying it to the Permanent Fund Dividend residency requirements. She maintained residents should be prioritized when it comes to Alaska's resources.

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CHAIR MCKAY, after ascertaining there was no one else who wished to testify, closed public testimony on HB 201.

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CHAIR MCKAY announced that HB 201 was held over.

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ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Resources Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at [2:05] p.m.