

SCOMM

102:7

Alaska State Legislature

House of Representatives

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Representative Al Vezey

HB 96 BOARD OF FISH & BOARD OF GAME

SPONSOR STATEMENT

Subsistence is one of the major issues facing Alaska. Our constitution mandates that our fish and game resources be managed on the sustained yield principle. A state with 565,000 square miles, over a million lakes, and more coastline than the rest of the country put together should be able to produce enough food to feed its citizens.

HB 96 is an attempt to recognize and put into statute the basic value of consumptive uses of fish and game resources. All Alaskans do and will continue to benefit from our fish and game resources. This bill will ensure that members of our boards that manage fish and game resources will have personal experience in the value of the consumptive uses of our resources. In addition, it provides that they have practical experience in managing these resources by virtue of previously having served on a board with management responsibilities for fish and game resources.

Abundance of fish and wildlife for all Alaskans is the only practical solution to the subsistence impasse. Abundance of fish and wildlife is what the people of Alaska need, want, and demand.

In addition, the programs that the Board of Fisheries and the Board of Game administer are paid for by license fees. These are not voluntary contributions. The people that manage our fish and game programs should be users that help fund the programs.

DATE: April 9, 1997

Representative Alan Austerman, Chair,
Members of the House Fisheries Committee

SUBJECT: HOUSE BILL NO.96

FROM: Bill Stockwell
P.O. Box 721
Cooper Landing, AK 99572

I am unable to attend the House Fisheries Hearing on HB 96 on April 9, 1997. Please enter my written testimony into the records of your hearing.

I am submitting this testimony as an individual and not as a member of any organization. I am a 25 year Alaskan now living in Cooper Landing. I am active in habitat, land use, fish and wildlife issues in the Kenai River Watershed and am a member of the Cooper Landing Fish and Game Advisory Committee. I have testified before and heard deliberations by the Boards of Game, Fisheries and the Joint Board in recent months. I know the process and the people.

I received a copy of HB 96 and have read and reviewed this bill. House Bill NO. 96 is unnecessary and discriminatory and I am OPPOSED to the enactment of this legislation.

This bill serves no useful purpose. The purchase of an Alaska sport fishing, hunting or trapping license is a requirement for the privilege to fish, hunt or trap. No training, proficiency, or skill level in sport fishing, hunting or trapping is required nor is the desire to sport fish, hunt or trap required to obtain these licenses. While the purchase of a crewmember license may show a desire to work in the fishing industry, no training, proficiency or skill level is required to obtain this license. Limited entry and interim-use permits are exclusionary requirements to commercial fishery resources. Adding these requirements to the other qualifications listed in AS 16.05.221(a) and AS 16.05.221(b) accomplishes absolutely nothing.

The principles of common use and sustained yield are guaranteed in our Constitution, Article VIII, Sections 3 & 4. All Alaskans support the principles of the Constitution. The problem is that all the diverse interests to fish and wildlife feel that their view is highest and most preferential to preferences among beneficial uses and all harvestable surpluses should be theirs to use as they desire. As long as Alaska's fish and wildlife are managed for sustained yield, the winners of the allocations battles will smile and the losers will whine to their legislators. Only when we no longer have sustained replenishable resources will these issues to preferences among beneficial uses cease. This wording does not belong in this bill.

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The enactment of this bill will disenfranchise and discriminate against that segment of the Alaskans who do not choose to exercise their privilege to fish, hunt or trap but who use Alaska's replenishable resources of fish and wildlife for other economic gain or personal pleasure. As few new residents to Alaska will have held nonresident fishing, hunting and/or trapping licenses for 4 or more years before moving to our State, this bill would impose a de facto 5 year resident requirement for Board of Game membership. This is unequal, unfair and discriminatory.

While the requirement to have served on an advisory committee may be admirable, it is also unnecessary. Advisory committees are local forums for local fish and wildlife habitat and conservation issues and members may or may not possess knowledge or interest in statewide fish or wildlife conservation and management. Advisory committee members are elected by local voters and answer to local voters. A full term on an advisory committee could be 1 to 3 years with 3 years the maximum. While the majority of Board of Game members have served on local advisory committees, many on the Board of Fisheries have not. The people now serving on the Boards of Fisheries and Game serve the best interests of all Alaskans. Please vote against these unnecessary changes to AS 16.05.221(a) and AS 16.05.221(b).

Thank you for considering those of us who hold identification cards issued under AS 16.05.400(b) but with age does not necessarily come infinite wisdom. Future Board of Fisheries and Board of Game members must be chosen for overall ability and not judged on single issues.

Thank you for reading my comments. Sincerely,

Bill Stockwell



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