

**Testimony in Opposition of HB 2039
To
The House Committee on Veterans and Military**

**By Brad Loveless, Secretary
Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks**

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HB 2039 seeks to: 1) exempt veterans with service-connected disabilities of 50% or greater from obtaining annual hunting, fishing or combination hunt/fish licenses or lifetime licenses; 2) prohibit KDWP from charging such disabled veterans any fee; 3) removes from existing law the half-priced discount on annual hunting, fishing, or combination hunting/fishing licenses for those 65 to 74; and 4) require those 75 and older to obtain a hunting or fishing license by removing their statutory exemption.

Impact from Changing Reimbursement Structure on Disabled Vets

Under existing law, veterans with service-connected disabilities of 30% or greater can obtain annual hunting, fishing or combination hunt/fish licenses or lifetime licenses from KDWP free of charge. KDWP is reimbursed costs associated with the free licenses, which allows it to also qualify for financial funds on each of those licenses. By changing the disability rating from 30% to 50%, some veterans would not qualify for obtaining a free license, but how many veterans this change impacts is unknown. This change would also prohibit KDWP from claiming those veterans for purposes of federal funding appropriations.

Creating Enforcement Problems

By not requiring a license at all for disabled veterans, creates an enforcement problem for KDWP and a paperwork issue for disabled veterans. If a qualifying disabled veteran were asked to provide proof of a license to law enforcement, they would not have such a license. They would most likely be required to submit certifications of his or her disability as proof they are hunting or fishing legally.

Possible Alternatives to Assist Disabled Veterans & KDWP

It would be beneficial to our qualified disabled veterans to require KDWP to continue to issue a license to the disabled veterans, and it would be beneficial to KDWP to allow it to partner with a third-party to reimburse the agency for the cost of a disabled veterans license, such as a non-profit. This would allow for the licenses issued to be eligible for federal funding appropriations.

To accomplish this, new section 2(b)(6) (line 43, page 3 & line 1, page 4) should be removed and language in section 3(e) (lines 10-13, page 7) should be altered to require annual hunting and fishing licenses issued to disabled veterans to be free of charge but reimbursable by a third-party benefactor.

While obsolete language is being changed by the Revisor, it should be noted that the phrase “handicapped or developmentally disabled individuals” found at line 40, page 2 should probably be updated to “persons with a physical or developmental disability.”

Impact of Removing Half-Prices Licenses to 65 and Older

Existing law allows for those 65 to 74 years of age to receive annual hunt, fish, or combination license for half-priced. Those 75 or older do not have to have such licenses. When this provision was placed into statute, KDWP created a Senior Lifetime License, at a cost of \$40 per year, for those 65-74.

If the half-priced benefit is removed for 65- to 74-year-olds, it will result in a positive fiscal note for the agency. Since 75 and older do not have to have a hunt or fishing license, law enforcement relies on their drivers license for verification, KDWP has no way of calculating the fiscal note, but it would have a positive impact financially of the agency.

These changes on age requirements would also make the \$40 Senior Lifetime License more appealing to our older constituents, as it would cost less than an annual fishing/hunting combination licenses (\$45). Since the Senior Lifetime License was originally anticipated to last at most of 10 years, KDWP would need to evaluate the viability of the fee associated with such a lifetime license.

As Secretary, I thank the Committee for its time and consideration. Should you ever have any questions related to KDWP's operation, please let me know. We will try to answer any questions it might have.