



Date: January 24, 2023

Bill: HB 2039: Exempting disabled veterans from certain requirements and fees relating to hunting and fishing licenses.

Disposition: Recommended Amendments

Testimony: Written

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Organization: Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation

Honorable Members of the House Committee on Veterans and Military:

On behalf of the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation (CSF), I write to express suggested amendments to House Bill 2039 that are designed to preserve the integrity of the "user pays – public benefits" American System of Conservation Funding (ASCF). While CSF appreciates opportunities to show support for those who served our nation as members of the armed forces, there are considerations associated with hunting and fishing license exemptions, such as those included in HB 2039, that must be taken into account to ensure the future success of hunter and angler supported conservation efforts in Kansas.

Founded in 1989, the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation (CSF) is the informed authority across outdoor issues and serves as the primary conduit for influencing public policy. Working with the Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus (CSC), the Governors Sportsmen's Caucus (GSC), and the National Assembly of Sportsmen's Caucuses (NASC), CSF gives a voice to hunters, anglers, recreational shooters, and trappers on Capitol Hill and throughout state capitols advocating on vital outdoor issues that are the backbone of our nation's conservation legacy.

Funded by the sale of hunting and fishing licenses and permits, along with revenue generated from self-imposed excise taxes through the Pittman-Robertson Act and Dingell-Johnson Act with Wallop-Breaux Amendments, the ASCF serves as the primary source of revenue for the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks (KDWP). While the implications of discounting or outright waiving license requirements on license revenue are obvious, what is less known is the impact of license exemptions on the ability of KDWP to fully claim their portion of revenue made available through the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration (Pittman-Robertson) Act. In making apportionments of this funding, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service uses a formula¹ that,

¹ Congressional Research Service. April 5, 2019. Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act: Understanding Apportionments for States and Territories. Accessed: January 19, 2023. <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/misc/R45667.pdf>

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in part, considers the number of eligible hunting and fishing licenses sold. To be counted, licenses not only need to be required, but must also result in revenue collected by the state fish and wildlife management agency (i.e., KDWP). In turn, each certified hunting license results in, approximately, an additional \$26 and each fishing license brings in \$10 of federal aid².

While CSF understands the desire to provide benefits for disabled veterans such as those described in HB 2039, we respectfully ask the Committee to consider amending the bill to also include specific language that creates a reimbursement to KDWP from the general fund for any license or permit revenue forgone as a result of this and any other free or discounted license or permit provided by the legislature going forward. In so doing, the legislature will retain the opportunity to provide these incentives or rewards to deserving demographics without unduly threatening the ability of KDWP to receive the funding necessary to continue its work managing Kansas' public trust fish and wildlife resources for the benefit of all Kansans. Examples of this framework already exist in Kansas with respect to active members of the Kansas National Guard (i.e., reimbursements paid from the Economic Development Initiatives Fund)³ and in other states for all license and permit discounts granted by the legislature⁴. Given KDWP's almost complete reliance on the ASCF, we believe that these amendments would be a valuable addition in the Sunflower State.

In conclusion, CSF asks the Committee to explore amendments that would require all adult hunters and anglers to obtain some form of license while providing a reimbursement to KDWP for any lost revenue resulting from the availability of discounted or no-cost licenses or permits. Doing so will ensure that deserving demographics can receive the benefits that the Legislature seeks to provide while safeguarding the ASCF and KDWP's ability to perform their duties. If you have questions or would like any additional information, please feel free to contact me using the information below.

Sincerely,



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² Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation. 2023. Reimbursement to Fish and Wildlife Agencies for Free and Discounted Licenses. Accessed: January 19, 2023. <https://congressionalsportsmen.org/policies/state/reimbursement-to-fish-and-wildlife-agencies-for-free-and-discounted-license>

³ Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks. Pers. Commun. January 23, 2023.

⁴ Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation. 2023. Reimbursement to Fish and Wildlife Agencies for Free and Discounted Licenses. Accessed: January 19, 2023. <https://congressionalsportsmen.org/policies/state/reimbursement-to-fish-and-wildlife-agencies-for-free-and-discounted-license>