

TESTIMONY

Senate Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources

HB 2167 – An Act concerning wildlife; relating to the transferability of deer tags.

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On behalf of the
Kansas Sport Hunting Association
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PROPONENT

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Chairman Kerschen and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Kansas Sport Hunting Association (KSHA), I am pleased to offer their support to HB 2167, which would allow the Secretary of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism to establish a system to approve and administer the transfer of certain landowner or tenant hunt-on-your-own-land big game permits.

The KSHA is the state's leading outdoor association representing hunting service professionals, game bird producers and suppliers.

The contents of HB 2167 is not new to the legislative process; this legislation has been brought forth on a number of occasions in the past. Historically the Department and some private sector citizens alike have expressed opposition to this legislation, and we have heard comments to the effect, "this has been tried and it did not work."

A couple of observations:

1. The Department should be asked why it did not work in the past? When was a program initiated and what consideration has been given to revisit this issue? We have new people at the Department, new ideas and the same challenges – how can Kansas grow its in-state and out-of-state hunting opportunities and successfully manage its premier deer herd.
2. HB 2167 gives the Department control over this program as stated in the bill: "The Secretary... shall establish a system to approve and administer..." We believe that control by the Department vests implementation within their purview and allows them to develop and implement this legislation, perhaps even as a limited pilot program to test out program options.

The bill was amended in the House Commerce, Labor and Economic Development Committee to allow the Department to restrict the location where the transferee may hunt white-tailed deer to the same area the landowner would be eligible to hunt; limit the landowner to one tag per year; and, impose a 5-year sunset.

We also know deer herds aren't just creatures of beauty to be admired; they cause loss of life and property damage when they enter the roadway; they eat and damage crops and can cause other disruptions for the landowner.

I would also note the farm economy is not doing so well in Kansas and the U.S.

A recent *Wall Street Journal* article highlighted some of the difficulties farmers are facing these days:

This One Here Is Going to Kick My Butt – Farm Belt Bankruptcies Are Soaring
Wall Street Journal, February 6, 2019

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/this-one-here-is-gonna-kick-my-buttfarm-belt-bankruptcies-are-soaring-11549468759>

The article detailed that “increased bankruptcies in the U.S. Farm Belt that are at their highest levels in at least ten years.”

All sectors are enduring challenging times, including livestock, dairy and grain farmers and ranchers. HB 2167 would provide an opportunity for some of our Kansas farmers and ranchers to make a little extra income and encourage them to open their land to more and more hunters. HB 2167 would also expand tourism in our state from out-of-state hunters, which would benefit not only the landowners affected by this bill but those involved in the travel and tourism industry as well.

More than 97% of Kansas land is privately owned. It is not realistic for the State to lease or own enough ground to accommodate all who would like to hunt and lack of available land to hunt is often cited as a reason for declining numbers of hunters.

In summary, the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism would control the implementation of this legislation as cited earlier in this testimony. The Kansas Sport Hunting Association believes they have the expertise to successfully manage such a program if they will work with the landowners to craft a workable program.

The Kansas Sport Hunting Association respectfully asks for the Committee's support of this legislation.

WBD

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