

Good Morning Chairman Smith, Members of the House Game and Fisheries Committee. My Name is Ed Wentzler, I am the Legislative Director for the United Bowhunters of Pennsylvania, and am speaking on their behalf, relating their feelings concerning House Bill 2602.

You have just heard from our President, Mr. Waldron, concerning the shortcomings of both past historical Hunting License Fee Increase packages, and those re-curing, same shortcomings, already inherently present in either of the dual packages now being considered by HB 2600 and HB 2601, respectively. Those shortcomings stem, simply and primarily, from failure to accommodate for inflation with some form of COLA mechanism. Our membership is quite aware of this fact, and also the undeniable implications of the fact, that Hunter License Fee dollars, alone, cannot much longer, if even now, support all the Wildlife Management efforts for all wildlife, which absolutely benefits and serves all citizens of our Commonwealth.

While we understand and even applaud the reasoning behind the introduction of House Bill 2602, and actually do support the concept of such legislation, we cannot support the Bill, for the same reasons sportsmen generally, statewide, have not supported any similar legislation in the past. We feel the major and primary impediment to Sportsmen and Hunters supporting such a concept, or such legislation to date, is a failure to satisfactorily address the problem and answer the question, “what becomes of the very significant investment hunters have already made for more than a century, to wildlife management and to habitat preservation in the form of real lands and vast acreages where hunters may actually hunt”?

It is crucially important that the Legislature fully understand that the PGC manages all forms of wildlife, on all lands of the Commonwealth, private and public, for all citizens of the

Commonwealth. Additionally, wildlife management, in one way or another, absolutely affects most, if not all, aspects of life for every individual, business, community, and region of our State. Each of us undeniably benefits or suffers in direct relationship to the health of our natural resources.

With that fact in mind, in the opinions of the leadership of the sportsmen's groups present here today, this standing House Committee on Game and Fisheries is one of the very most important Committees in State Government. It is incumbent on the members of this committee to place the highest priority on safeguarding our priceless natural resources and to do it with some real sense of perpetuity. At the turn of the last century, sportsmen lead the conservation movement, ably and willingly assisted by their elected officials. This effort was a monumental bi-partisan effort seldom seen outside the conditions of imminent, impending war. It is almost past time for all of us in this room to lead such a conservation effort again. It is as simple as identifying problems begging solutions, and working together to find those solutions equitably, with no attention to Party politics.

There is not one good reason why Pennsylvania should not lead this nation in abundantly funding natural resource conservation. There is not one good reason why the PGC should not have adequate funds vitally necessary to carry out its wildlife management responsibilities. There is no good reason why land use issues regarding privileges, priorities and responsibilities cannot be satisfactorily resolved for all citizens of the Commonwealth, including those of us who hunt. And, there is no reason why each citizen of this Commonwealth shouldn't happily contribute in some way to the effort to properly manage our wildlife resources and the habitats they require.

It is time for those of us in this room to get down to business and produce results.