

**Good morning Chairman Smith – Members of the House Game & Fisheries Committee. My name is Wes Waldron, and I am President of the United Bowhunters of Pennsylvania currently representing about 4000 members. I am here today to state my organizations support for an increase to the hunting license fee. However the UBP does have concerns in regard to the current proposals in HB 2600 and HB 2601. Our Legislative Director will address House Bill 2602 during his opportunity at this podium.**

**In consideration of the present financial state of the Pennsylvania Game Commission it is apparent that the amount of increase in HB 2600 is insufficient to satisfy the Agency’s financial needs for more than several years. And in further consideration of at the least the rising cost of petroleum and natural gas - not to mention the re-establishment of presently curtailed PGC programs - it is doubtful that the increase proposed in House Bill 2601 would prevent us from all too soon having to once again address this issue. In that regard we ask ourselves why the members of this Committee, along with the rest of the General Assembly, refuse to establish long-term funding to the agency that manages some of this Commonwealths most valuable resources – namely its wildlife and its public game lands?**

**I am not aware of any sportsmen’s group present that is not galvanized to action when any threat to our wildlife resources arises. However, the all too commonly occurring threat seems not to be the actions of the anti-hunters, but rather that of our wildlife agency having to cut programs and services to our wildlife and habitat resources and to the hunter, simply due to inadequate funds. The last hunting license increase passed in 1999, and within five years inflation had the Agency beginning to consider the need for cut-backs.**

**You have, on more than several occasions over the years, been presented with the opportunity to approve long term supplemental funding for the PGC through the use of small percentages from General Fund revenues. Your rejection of those opportunities notwithstanding, it is recognized that none of those funding possibilities are truly dependable in the long term. More realistic long term funding could be accomplished with a cost of living initiative, or as in the State of Missouri, by an allocation of a small percentage of the state sales tax.**

**While some of our own members may complain about wildlife decisions made by the PGC, they also admit that they *are* the agency that manages and protects our wildlife and game lands resources. And they, like yourselves, have offered no alternative for that management in the event the Agency is bankrupted.**

**The time has come to put aside what a majority of our members – as well as a majority of the general hunting community – are referring to as hostage tactics. We do not have a Pennsylvania Deer Commission. What we do have is the PA Game Commission that manages *all* of the Commonwealths game and non-game species for hunter and non-hunter alike.**

**Hunters have for the large part always objected to a hunting license increase – this is nothing new – but in the end nearly all of us pay the cost. It is the only way to preserve our resources, both flora and fauna, and to insure that the sport of hunting is preserved for our children, and our children’s children.**

**At least it was until now, for it has become readily apparent that the increase provided by HB 2600 is inadequate from the onset, and those provided by HB 2601 will not likely sustain Agency needs for more than 5-6 years. So in order for the Pennsylvania Game Commission to continue effectively managing their resources of responsibility, as well as continuing to offer services to both the hunters and the non-hunting public, either a Cost Of Living provision must be included in HB 2601, or some additional source of funding for the Pennsylvania Game Commission must be created.**

**Wes Waldron, President  
United Bowhunters of Pennsylvania**