

Dear Chairman Balderson,

The Ohio Division of Wildlife is facing a projected 100 million dollar plus budget shortfall during the next 10 years according to the Kasich Administration and the Sportsmen's Alliance [June 2017].

The Department of Natural Resources, only two months ago, finally acknowledged this in a meeting with DOW administrators, advising them to "prepare" their case for the next incoming administration.

The Division of Wildlife is facing mounting statewide criticism from its constituents for the number of vacant counties without properly trained wildlife officers, including the Lake Erie Enforcement Unit, criticism for the lack of habitat management of its wildlife areas and wildlife production areas, criticism for its lack of shooting ranges and their maintenance, etc.

This legislation will establish among other things combination and lifetime licenses offered at a discount in the spirit of providing customer service and convenience.

My belief and knowledge of this concept is that before any discounts are offered the overall financial situation of the Ohio Division of Wildlife should be addressed first. The luster of discounts will quickly fade away when the DOW's financial situation continues to worsen. However, in the spirit of cooperation and working with Senator Uecker, the bill's sponsor, and members of the Senate and House, I would be willing to support this legislation if the discount was only very modest, no more than 5 percent.

The DOW paid for a report by Southwick and Associates to evaluate the impact of establishing such licenses. Their conclusion was not to exceed 5 percent. Southwick and Associates are the best in the country for providing this type of information and they are widely used by many State Wildlife agencies.

As you are aware licenses, permits, federal excise taxes on hunting, fishing, equipment and ammunition are the lifeblood of wildlife agencies throughout our country. This is known as The North

American Model for Wildlife Conservation. Most sportsmen are proud of this fact and willingly support periodic fee increases. To coin a phrase, “they aren’t shy to pony up to the table” to pay for the sport they are passionate about. This is a business, a big business, in Ohio, that annually pumps over a billion dollars into our economy.

Therefore, in closing, I just urge you, while considering the view of customer service and convenience you also consider the impact this will have on the overall business. No state wildlife agency in the country can say that offering discounts and combination licenses have increased license sales.

Most respectfully,

Michael J. Budzik  
Former Chief of the Ohio Division of Wildlife  
9-95 through 2-2003