

The Honorable Joe Uecker

Ohio Senate Corrections Sub-Committee

Testimony on H.B. 64, Ohio's Budget Bill In Support of:  
Non-Resident Hunting License and Deer Permit Fee Increase

Thursday, May 21, 2015

Presented by: Jeff Herrick – Affiliated with Northeast Ohio Sportsmen and  
Conservation Clubs

Good morning Chairman Uecker and members of the Ohio Senate Corrections Sub-Committee. My name is Jeff Herrick and I appreciate you giving me the opportunity to share my support for the **non-resident** hunting license and deer permit fee increase proposed by the ODNR, Division of Wildlife.

Over 38,000 non-resident sportsmen and women flock to Ohio each fall to pursue whitetail deer hunting because of the high quality deer herd and very low license fees which have not seen an increase in 11 years. As a cost comparison Ohio's non-resident fees rank 35<sup>th</sup> in the nation. North American Whitetail Magazine ranks Ohio as the number Six destination in the country for deer hunting, based on a number of scoring factors. In fact, no other state other than Iowa, Illinois, and Wisconsin have put more "Boone and Crockett" trophy bucks in the record books over the past five years than Ohio!

In my lifetime I have been fortunate enough to hunt in 8 other states as a non-resident hunter, and can tell you Ohio is quite a bargain. I recently spent \$220 in North Dakota to hunt pheasants and waterfowl, which included no big game animals. In Florida, a turkey permit used to cost me \$5 in addition to my non-resident license, just 10 years ago. That same \$5 permit now costs me \$125 because they have a sub-species of wild turkey that cannot be found anywhere else in the U. S., similar to the trophy bucks found here in Ohio.

As you may already know, the Division of Wildlife receives nearly all of their funding through the sale of hunting and fishing licenses and reimbursements from an 11% excise tax on hunting and fishing equipment, which sportsmen and

women have supported since 1937. The federal government, through the USFWS distributes the collected excise taxes back to the states based on number of hunting and fishing licenses sold and land area. The challenge here is that the states have to spend their license dollars first before they can get the federal excise tax reimbursements. They receive a 75% reimbursement, so for every four license dollars spent they receive three in return. Since 1939, these excise taxes on hunting and fishing equipment have provided over \$190 million to Ohio for wildlife conservation. What happens if Ohio cannot come up with enough license monies because of lean budgets and no license increase in the last 11 years to capture these funds? You guessed it – they are returned to the federal government and distributed to other states, even though Ohio sportsmen and women paid these excise taxes when they purchased their hunting or fishing equipment. Can any of us with a clear conscience allow these dollars earmarked for Ohio to be diverted to other states? Let's make sure the wildlife fund remains healthy through this non-resident license increase to capture all federal dollars available to Ohio!

As sportsmen, we expect the Division of Wildlife to manage our dollars wisely, providing high quality hunting, fishing and trapping opportunities and good wildlife law enforcement to enforce necessary regulations. I am proud of all this agency has been able to accomplish in light of no license fee increases in the last 11 years, serious personnel reductions and consolidations, and never ending challenges. They have provided high quality shooting ranges to develop safe skills for hunters and concealed carry permit holders, youth hunt programs that provide a lifetime of memories, stocked our lakes with all kinds of fish, provided a wildlife area to hunt on or a place to launch our boat on a reservoir or Lake Erie. These are just a few of the things we take for granted, not knowing if the funding will be there for these great things to continue. Nine out of ten of the numerous conservation club members I come in contact with support the modest non-resident hunting license and deer permit fee increase. I and numerous conservation clubs throughout Ohio ask for your support of this proposed legislation.

Thank you for your time and service.

Jeff Herrick

