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### **HB 49 -Resident Hunting & Fishing License Increase**

*(Please note: I support a fair and equitable increase in NR license and tags)*

Chairman Jordan, members of the Senate Finance and Agency Review Subcommittee, today you're going to hear a lot of testimony from fellow sportsmen and others about why the Ohio Division of Wildlife needs more money and they will remind you they haven't had a license increase in over 13 years. During that same period hunting & fishing license sales have declined and the pool of hunters and fishermen is getting shallower all the time. Will not a fee increase in resident license accelerate that decline? Possibly. That additional money they seek will come from the wallets and purses of approximately 650,000 resident anglers and 250,000 resident hunters. I will argue that those that have, or will, stand before you are focused only on the Division of Wildlife. There are a lot of people hurting financially these days. When I used to teach hunter education class, half the class were single mom's try to get their young son or daughters into hunting as an outdoor activity, to get them outside away from the TV. I live in Adams County, a very poor county that is about to lose one of its primary industries, the closing of two power plants on the Ohio River. This is going to devastate the local economy but it's just not Adams County, stories like these are repeated all-across Appalachia and southeast Ohio. Good jobs are few and far in between and those working at Wal-Mart, Speedway, driving a school bus, babysitting part time to make ends meet, or going to school to make a better life are the ones that are going to feel the real pinch in a license increase. It's not going to affect me one way or another but when I look around and I see that most fishermen sitting along the shore or on the dock of a state lake fishing for whatever bites aren't represented here today. The price of a family member to get other family members involved in the outdoors will and has become more costly, do you really want to enact another barrier. It almost seems a paradox to get more people involved in hunting and fishing you raise the price of participation. In another 10 years is the Division of Wildlife is going to come back with its supporters and demand another license increase. This can't go on forever. The spiraling increases will soon hit a ceiling if it hasn't already. Ironically, the last time resident license were increased I was told by an official within DOW that \$20 was a sociological barrier they did not want to cross for fear they would lose license sales, hence resident license were capped at \$19.00. The fact that the single largest vendor of resident hunting and fishing license in Ohio is Wal-Mart should tell you something. Those at the bottom of the economic ladder will feel the increase the most, and those that can least afford it will think twice if it's worth it. Raising resident license fees should be a last resort. I have an idea that might satisfy all parties and that is to have a \$3 donation check box on every hunting & fishing license sold that could be checked or clicked on at the time of purchase and that amount would be automatically added to the cost of the license. Therefore those that wish to support the DOW financially could do so without adding that burden to those that can least afford it.

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