



OHIO HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

State Representatives David Thomas and Kellie Deeter

Testimony before the Ohio Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee April 8, 2025 on H.B. 64 Senior Sportsmen Fairness Act

Representative Kellie Deeter:

Chair Schaffer, Vice Chair Koehler, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resource Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of our Senior Sportsmen Fairness Act, HB 64. This bill passed the Ohio House Natural Resource Committee on March 5th 12-0 and the Ohio House the same day 96-0.

HB 64 is a pretty straightforward one. On Rep. Thomas' first day in office, he had a message from a constituent named Gary who shared he was all excited when he turned 65 to get a discount on his hunting and fishing license because he thought, as do most Ohioans I believe, that 65 is when those types of discounts get enacted. Well, it turns out much to his disappointment, that in Ohio it is age 66 when those senior discounts get applied.

He didn't think that was right and frankly, Rep. Thomas agreed and told him he'd work to fix that. I was asked to join onto this bill given the strong sportsmen spirit in my district and my love of seniors living a healthy outdoors lifestyle.

Ohio Revised Code includes 9 discounts for seniors to receive benefits. 8 of them are for residents 65 and younger, and this license discount is the only one age 66 and above. In research, the 66 age came about in 1913. Now, why age 66 in 1913? Especially when the average life expectancy was 54 years old in the United States? I'm not sure. My only guess is those who turned 66 if they were luck in 1913 would have been born in 1847 and would have likely been the last remaining Civil War veterans. The equivalent today would be 90 years old.

Representative David Thomas:

The age 66 to my knowledge had not been questioned for the past 112 years until Gary messaged me on New Years to ask why. I'm a firm believer if you don't have an answer for a policy, you change the policy to fit the question. The senior discount is not earth shattering for folks as the discount for fishing licenses lowers the traditional \$25 resident license to \$10 for seniors and hunting discount lowers the regular adult cost from \$19 to \$10. And one additional year of qualifications will not break any bank for the state.

However, the idea of encouraging our seniors to be outside, bring their grandkids along to enjoy the great outdoors, and provide a little awareness and incentive around this concept I believe is well worth our time today.

We have spoken with ODNR about this change and they are not opposed to the bill. We also want to be clear that it is important for our sportsmen community to purchase licenses as these dollars are used for conservation and making a better experience for all in Ohio in addition to bringing down federal monies for those sold.

With that, I urge support for this legislation and am happy to answer any questions the committee may have.