



STATE REPRESENTATIVE

KATHY BERNIER

June 10, 2015

To: Assembly Committee on Natural Resources and Sporting Heritage

From: Rep. Kathy Bernier

Re: Assembly Bill 243 (Restrictions on deer hunting by members of a group hunting party)

Good morning Chairman Ott and committee members. Thank you for hearing Assembly Bill 243 today and for the opportunity to speak in favor of passage.

As a way to address and preserve the integrity of our youth hunt and ensure that carcass tags issued to hunters under age 18 are used properly, Assembly Bill 243 changes statute regarding deer hunting regulations related to group hunting parties. Specifically, the bill prohibits an adult member of a hunting party from using a youth carcass tag to harvest an antlerless deer for a youth member of their party.

The bill has been brought forward by Senator Moulton in response to statewide complaints about hunting parties harvesting deer with tags designated for youth, when those younger hunters are indeed, not the ones shooting.

Senator Moulton and members of DNR will testify today with more specific information, but I am pleased to offer this companion bill in the Assembly and if I can help answer any questions I am happy to do so. Again, thank you for your time and for hearing Assembly Bill 243 today.

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TERRY MOULTON



WISCONSIN STATE SENATOR

23RD SENATE DISTRICT

Senator Terry Moulton
Testimony on Assembly Bill 243
June 10, 2015

Mr. Chairman and committee members, thank you for the opportunity to join Representative Bernier to speak to you today about Assembly Bill 243.

Wisconsin has some of the best hunting and fishing in the world, and hunting is an important part of our state's history and heritage. In recent years there has been a decline in the number of Wisconsin hunters. While this trend is unfortunate for our young people and our hunting and sporting heritage, it also hurts our state's bottom line. The Department of Natural Resources and major Wisconsin industries depend on hunters to control white tail deer population and other animals who threaten agriculture, transportation, and other industries. In addition, every animal harvested by citizen hunters not only brings in revenue through licensure and tagging, but saves the Department of Natural Resources money in population control.

As such, in 2013, the legislature passed the Sportsmen's Heritage Bill, a series of provisions aimed at hunter recruitment and retention, including the establishment of a youth hunt. While the youth hunt has been well-received, there have been statewide complaints of adults harvesting antlerless deer using a youth tag during group hunting. **Assembly Bill 243 would preserve the integrity of the youth hunt by prohibiting members of a group deer hunt from using a designated youth tag issued to another member of the party.** This bill would ensure that deer marked with a designated youth tag were in fact harvested by youth.

I hope that the committee will strongly consider the passage of AB 143 to preserve the integrity of Wisconsin's youth hunt. Thank you again for allowing me to testify today.

Serving the 23rd Senate District



Remarks of Scott Loomans
Before the Assembly Committee on Natural Resources and Sporting Heritage
June 10, 2015

Chair Ott and committee members:

Assembly Bill 243 establishes that the free antlerless deer tag issued with firearm deer licenses to people age 17 or younger, which is normally valid statewide under current rules, is not valid for use in group bagging situations.

Currently, under our group hunting law, any member of a group of people who are all hunting with firearms may kill a deer for another member of the group as long as the person who kills the deer and the person who tags the deer are within sight and voice contact when the deer is killed. Group hunting was first allowed in 1984.

The department did hear about concerns last fall, after a season where antlerless permits were not generally available in most northern units, about antlerless deer harvest by adults legally under the group deer hunting law. While many members of the public are fine with youth being able to harvest an antlerless in a non-quota unit, they tell us they do not like that adults can also fill those tags in group hunting situations.

The opportunity for a young deer hunter to harvest an antlerless deer is a good thing to increase their chances of success and keep them hunting. But the department does not have rulemaking authority to both issue those antlerless tags to youth *and* to prevent adults from tagging their deer with them. Our only option would be to establish that the youth antlerless deer permits are not valid for anyone in units with no antlerless deer quota.

The legislature can change the group deer hunting law in a way that preserves this antlerless deer hunting opportunity for young people but also establishes that junior antlerless tags are not available for group hunting and being filled by adults. That appears to be what this bill is doing.

To give you an idea of the scope of things, I have attached the number of antlerless deer registered by youth hunters in areas where the department had not otherwise established an antlerless quota in recent years. Since the person whose tag is on the deer is person who is required to register it, we cannot tell how many of those deer were actually harvest by adults.

I would be happy to answer questions.

Attachment:

- 2011: 575 antlerless kills by youth in the 8 No quota units (3077 sq mi of deer range for a kill of 0.19 per sq mile)
- 2012: 266 antlerless kills by youth in the 6 No quota units (1737 sq mi of deer range for a kill of 0.15 per sq mile)
- 2013: 95 antlerless kills by youth during the 9-day in the 4 No quota units (1109 sq mi of deer range for a kill of 0.09 per sq mile)
- 2014: 3277 antlerless kills by youth during the 9-day in the 16 No quota units (13,118 sq mi of deer range for a kill of 0.25 per sq mile) Douglas, Marinette and Florence are not counted as they either had a portion of the "unit" that had a quota or had high numbers of damage tags.

GOOD MORNING LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

MY NAME IS LEE FAHRNEY. I AM HERE TODAY REPRESENTING THE WISCONSIN CONSERVATION CONGRESS. I SERVE ON THE CONGRESS EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AS CHAIR OF PUBLIC RELATIONS AND OUTREACH. THANK YOU FOR THIS OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK IN FAVOR OF AB 243. I WILL BE BRIEF.

OUR ORGANIZATION IS PLEASED TO SEE THAT THE LEGISLATURE IS CONSIDERING THIS CHANGE WHICH WE WHOLEHEARTEDLY SUPPORT. WHILE WE HAVE GONE ON RECORD IN THE PAST AS SUPPORTING THE ISSUANCE OF A YOUTH CARCASS TAG, WE BELIEVE THE CURRENT POLICY OF ALLOWING GROUP HUNTING USING THAT TAG IS NOT APPROPRIATE.

THE ANTLERLESS TAG WAS MEANT TO GET YOUTH INVOLVED WITH OUR HUNTING HERITAGE BY ALLOWING AN ADDITIONAL OPPORTUNITY TO HARVEST A DEER AND SHOULD BE RESERVED FOR THOSE PERSONS.

IT IS INCUMBENT UPON ALL OF US TO URGE OUR YOUTH TO GET OUT INTO THE NATURAL WORLD, TO ENJOY THE OUTDOORS AND TAKE ADVANTAGE OF ALL THE OPPORUNITIES THIS GREAT STATE HAS TO OFFER. MANY OF OUR STATE CONSERVATION ORGANIZATIONS AND THE DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES HAVE GONE TO GREAT LENGTHS TO ENSURE THOSE OPPORTUNITIES ARE AVAILABLE.

to our youth

AT THE SAME TIME WE MUST ENSURE THAT THESE OPPORTUNITIES ARE AVAILABLE FOR THE PURPOSE INTENDED.

PART OF THE CONCERN REGARDING THIS MATTER RELATES TO THE DECREASE IN DEER POPULATIONS IN SOME PARTS OF THE STATE. UNTIL THOSE NUMBERS RECOVER, THE YOUTH ANTLERLESS TAG BECOMES A VALUABLE POSSESSION IN THOSE AREAS AND COULD BE ABUSED IF NOT RESTRICTED TO THE TAG HOLDER.

AGAIN WE URGE THAT YOUR COMMITTEE ADVANCE THIS BILL TO THE FULL LEGISLATURE.

THANK YOU!