



TERRY MOULTON



WISCONSIN STATE SENATOR

23RD SENATE DISTRICT

From: Senator Terry Moulton

To: Assembly Committee on Natural Resources and Sporting Heritage

Re: **Testimony on Assembly Bill 665**
Relating to: voluntary contributions to pay for hunting and fishing approvals for disabled veterans and making an appropriation.

Date: December 6, 2017

Mr. Chairman and committee members, thank you for allowing me to submit testimony today for Assembly Bill 665, which would allow a person to donate money to hunting and fishing licenses for disabled veterans.

As you probably know, hunting and fishing can be a therapeutic activity for sportsmen and sportswomen. The quiet sounds of nature, the beauty and the wildlife all have a calming effect on people. A successful day of hunting and fishing not only can help with stress, but it is also a source of food that many families rely on it to supplement their grocery needs.

For veterans who have served our country, the benefits of hunting and fishing can have an even larger impact. Many veterans who come back from serving suffer from physical injuries or mental conditions like Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Sometimes these conditions require vets to periodically remove themselves from their daily lives to heal. Hunting and fishing have become a popular activity for vets to take part in and that is why it is important to make the process easier.

Assembly Bill 665 helps get veterans into the outdoors by allowing individuals to pay for disabled veterans' hunting and fishing tags and licenses. Specifically, this bill would allow any person to make a donation to the Department of Natural Resources to cover a portion or all of the hunting and fishing approvals for disabled veterans. This donation would apply to resident disabled veterans of the state.

This bill will help disabled veterans who might not be able to afford to get a license and allows them to get involved in a beneficial hobby. Allowing people to voluntarily donate to hunting and fishing approvals is also a great way to thank disabled veterans for their service.

Please recommend passage of Assembly Bill 665 and allow people to support disabled veterans in a new way. Thank you again for allowing me to submit testimony today.

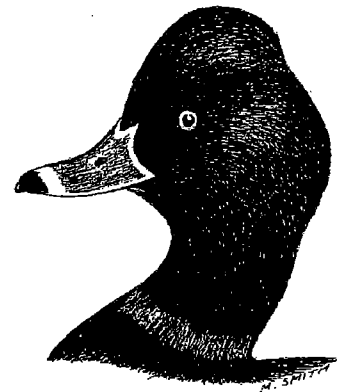
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Testimony for AB 665 to Assembly Committee on Natural Resources
and Sporting Heritage December 6, 2017

My name is Tim Eisele and I am a freelance outdoor writer and photographer living in Madison. I am testifying in favor of AB 665 that would allow people and organizations to donate money to pay for hunting and fishing licenses for disabled veterans.

First, I would like to let you know that I am testifying for myself but as a member of the Wisconsin Outdoor Communicators Association, and one of our members was instrumental in helping with this proposal. I am pleased to have been one of the original founding members of WOCA, formed in 1976 and had the privilege of serving on its Board of Directors for many years and three times as its president. We are an organization of outdoor writers, broadcasters, editors, photographers and communicators who try to facilitate getting important information on natural resources to Wisconsin citizens. This State has a unique and proud heritage of outdoor communications, through such people such as Gordon MacQuarrie, Jay Reed, Don Johnson, Aldo Leopold, and many others.

WOCA holds an annual meeting each year during August at Trees For Tomorrow in Eagle River and we have had legislators address us about natural resource issues. Some include Scott Gunderson - when he chaired this Assembly Committee, Representative Kleefisch, Senator Tiffany, and this year Representative Milroy, and I believe as a result of that contact between Rep. Milroy and one of our members, Art Barlow (Art Barlow worked with veterans on behalf of Nicolet College in Rhinelander), is where this proposed legislation was spawned.

It is also appropriate that this hearing is held the day before "Pearl Harbor Day" and I am testifying out of respect for several people very close to me, including my late Father Karl Eisele Jr. who served in the Army Air Corps during World War II flying as a bombardier/navigator on a



B-24 stationed in England and the plane was hit by anti-aircraft fire on his 23rd mission but fortunately was able to make it toward Sweden and was taken in by the neutral country; my Uncle David Eisele who served in the U.S. Navy in the Pacific during WW II; my wife's father the late Carl Chappell who served in the Air Force; and, after my Father passed away in 1988, my Mother's second husband the late Howard Heiliger who served in the Marine Corps during World War II and was taken prisoner by the Japanese, survived the Bataan Death March, and was held in a Japanese prison camp for two years returning to Wisconsin as a disabled veteran.

I firmly believe that veterans who have served this country deserve our thanks and those who are disabled and return home deserve **every bit of support** that we can give them. And we have heard time and again how being outdoors and participating in hunting and fishing are wholesome activities that can heal souls. For many of us the time in a marsh at sunrise, being in a turkey woods sitting at the base of an oak tree and hearing nearby gobbling, or casting and slowly walking upstream in the moonlit evening as mayflies hatch, is our outdoor church and provides time to reflect on life and re-set our own moral compass.

Just last week I was attending the Senate and Assembly Committees on Sporting Heritage and Forestry hearings where people who work with disabled and homeless veterans told how being outdoors, able to walk in the woods and fish on stocked ponds was helpful to clear their heads of the stress after returning from serving overseas.

One of our WOCA members, Tom Muench has worked 49 years at the Veteran's Hospital in Tomah as a mental health outpatient clinic counselor and he told me that 90% of his workload is with veterans suffering PTSD. His theory is that the more they can get outside and active in things like turkey hunting or fishing, the better it is for them to be positive. (Tom, by the way, said he was 5 years old and recalls that his father was listening to a football game on the radio when an announcer interrupted the broadcast to announce that Pearl Harbor had been attacked).

It seems that soliciting donations from citizens and organizations is a great way to fund this program and provides **just a little bit more that we can do** to help disabled veterans afford to be outdoors and just may provide additional healing. I talked to another WOCA member, Jim Bishop in Spooner, and he said that his Am Vets Post 190 in Spooner is very interested in this bill and very much supports the concept. I believe that once people and organizations learn of the opportunity they will donate to the fund.

There are many benefits and few if any drawbacks to this proposed bill, and I hope you will support it. Thank you.

Testimony on Assembly Bill 665

December 6, 2017

Good morning. My name is Lee Fahrney. I am the commander of Dobson Johnson American Legion Post #142 in Blanchardville, I'm a veteran of 23 years active duty in the Air Force. I am also a member of the Wisconsin Outdoor Communicators Association. I have been asked to speak to you today on behalf of our president Patrick Durkin in support of AB 665. WOCA has been a strong advocate for disabled veterans, consistent with similar outdoor writers organizations in other states.

Veterans in Wisconsin have been very fortunate over the years in that we have always had excellent bipartisan support from our legislature and governor's office regardless of who occupies those positions. We are also fortunate here in the Madison area to have an outstanding resource in our VA hospital which is consistently listed among the best VA hospitals in America. We sincerely appreciate that support.

It is also gratifying to see that the legislature is taking up AB 665 at this time. As someone who spends a great deal of time in the outdoors I can vouch for the quality time that is spent there with family and friends or just being alone in a natural setting. I've spent a lot of time deer hunting over the past couple of months. While I haven't shot a deer, it was time well spent, especially at dawn when the sun breaks over the horizon and at dusk when the owls begin hooting, the geese crash land on the nearby pond and the afterglow shows its brilliant orange and pink hues in the western sky. Killing an animal, after all, is not always what is most important. Rather, it is the opportunity to get outside and enjoy the seasons and observe the complexities of the plant and animal kingdom.

Those are precious times when a disabled vet could find both adventure and spiritual renewal. That's why this bill is important. While I appreciate that disabled vets get a break on their licenses there are many other expenses that go into hunting such as clothing, firearms, crossbows and various accessories. This bill will offer an opportunity for individual sportsmen and women as well as related organizations to contribute to those costs.

I also noticed that these benefits will be directed to veterans whose disabilities are rated at 50 percent or more. Perhaps there has been some discussion about this or will be in the future, but I agree that 50 percent is an appropriate threshold. I also noted that unemployability is included as a criterion. This too is a good benchmark to keep in mind as this bill is deliberated.

Again, on behalf of my colleagues within the Wisconsin Outdoor Communicators Association and all veterans, I encourage passage of this bill.

Thank you!