

STATE REPRESENTATIVE  
**DON VRUWINK**

WISCONSIN STATE ASSEMBLY

43rd DISTRICT

## Facts on Assembly Bill 878 Lifetime Fishing License

- The current price for an annual resident fishing license is \$19.25 plus a 75-cent issuing fee for a total of \$20.
- AB 878 creates a lifetime fishing license that would cost \$19.25 times 30 years equals \$577.50. The 75-cent issuing fee would be added.
- The lifetime fishing license would be available only to state residents.
- If we find there is interest among state residents, we would consider another bill next session opening it up to out-of-state residents.
- For persons 62 and older, the cost of a lifetime fishing license is \$19.25 times five equals \$96.25. Again, the 75-cent issuing fee would be added.
- The intent of the bill is to encourage the next generations of fishing men and women.
- A lifetime fishing license would also allow people the convenience of not having to purchase a new license each year, and the cost would be locked in for life.

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**Assembly Bill 878**  
**Lifetime Fishing License**

Testimony of Rep. Don Vruwink  
Wednesday, January 31, 2108

Good Afternoon, Chairman Kleefisch, and members of the committee. Thank you for holding a hearing on my bill today.

I'm here with Senator Janis Ringhand, Senate co-sponsor of the bill.

Fishing has long been an important leisure pursuit, cultural symbol, and personal identity for many Wisconsinites.

It has also been a great economic source for many Wisconsin communities.

The current forecast suggests that the overall number of fishing license-holders will increase in the United States through 2060 as a function of the overall population increase, but per capita participation rates will decline.

According to a national study, 32 states offer some type of lifetime or one-time fishing, hunting or combined license.

License fees in the 32 states were determined by the legislature or by using actuarial tables to determine the revenue that would be lost when a customer bought a lifetime license instead of a series of annual licenses.

Nearly all states deposited the lifetime revenue in an interest-bearing account maintained for the purpose of fish management.

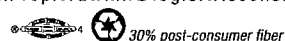
Under my bill, revenue from the lifetime fishing license would go into the Conservation Fund, which supports a wide range of fish and wildlife programs, including habitat management.

**-OVER-**

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The study showed that 52% of the states experienced a revenue increase after implementing the lifetime license, with 36% experiencing a drop in revenue. It found that a lifetime license sales did not significantly affect overall license sales. Most states said they made changes in the program after they began, such as raising or reducing fees and changing license requirements.

Our research found lifetime license programs vary widely. A Washington state study included specific recommendations for creating a lifetime license program for that state. These recommendations include heavily marketing the lifetime license.

Sales of Wisconsin's two combination licenses – sports and conservation patron licenses – have fallen sharply over the last decade. The number of conservation patron license holders is expected to continue to fall as the population continues to age.

I believe this is a golden time to consider a lifetime fishing license and other potentially license-building opportunities that more closely reflect current patterns among customers.

Wisconsin's per capita participation rate in fishing is approximately 20 percent, twice that of the nation. In 2009, 828,686 annual resident license were sold, Wisconsin's high point. Five years later, in 2014, that number decreased to 819,000. My goal is to increase the number of people fishing in Wisconsin and grow the sport.

Studies suggest the changing demographics of the state's population will negatively impact demand for fishing as millennials who do fish are less committed to fishing than previous generations based on the frequency in which they renew their fishing licenses.

The focus of implementing a lifetime fishing license is to increase the amount of participation by high school and college-age students.

The next generation of anglers are here to testify today in hopes of having the opportunity to continue this great Wisconsin pursuit.

Hopefully the addition of a lifetime license in Wisconsin will help maintain the leisure pursuit, cultural symbols, and personal identities of fishing in Wisconsin.

Once again, thank you for hearing this bill and for the opportunity to bring my people to testify.

**-END-**