



**Assembly Committee on Natural Resources and Sporting Heritage**  
*Disabled Veterans and Purple Heart Recipient Wild Turkey Hunting Tags*  
*2015 Assembly Bill 187*  
*June 10, 2015*

Good morning Chairman Ott and committee members. My name is Linda Olver, Policy Advisor in the Bureau of Customer and Outreach Services of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Thank you for the opportunity to testify for informational purposes on Assembly Bill 187, which allows disabled veterans and Purple Heart medal recipients to purchase a wild turkey tag without requiring the tags be issued using the cumulative preference system.

State law currently requires the department issue wild turkey tags via a cumulative preference system when the number of applicants for a given wild turkey hunting zone or season time period exceeds the number of available turkey tags allotted by the department. Preference within this system is based upon residency, landowner status, and the number of seasons for which the applicant applied for but was not issued a license. State law currently allows resident active duty U.S. armed forces members stationed outside of the state on furlough or leave to purchase a turkey tag without it being issued via the cumulative preference system. In addition, state law currently limits the number of turkey tags that may be issued to U.S. armed forces members to the same number a person may receive through the cumulative preference system.

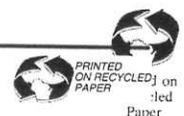
AB 187 proposes to extend this benefit beyond resident U.S. armed forces members to allow resident and nonresident disabled veterans and qualified recipients of the Purple Heart medal to receive a turkey tag without the tag being issued via the cumulative preference system. Under this bill, a disabled veteran must produce evidence showing he or she is a veteran and is receiving disability benefits for a disability rating that is 50 percent or greater, or is receiving disability benefits due to being unemployable. Also under this bill, a qualified recipient of the Purple Heart medal must exhibit proof that he or she has received the medal.

If enacted, the provisions of AB 187 would guarantee Purple Heart medal recipients and certain disabled veterans an opportunity to annually purchase a turkey tag for any turkey management zone during any time period even if the tags for that zone and time period are issued prior through the cumulative preference system or if remainder tags sell out when offered for sale "over the counter." While the method to purchase a turkey tag provided in this bill will not displace hunters applying for tags through the standard preference system, it will result in more turkey tags issued than allotted for the season. The extent to which these additional turkey tags *actually exceed* allotted turkey permit levels is unknown at this time but DNR can roughly estimate the number of disabled veterans and Purple Heart recipients that would be *eligible* to purchase a turkey tag outside of the cumulative preference system.

Based on previous sales of license products with similar qualifying criteria, DNR estimates a maximum of 11,000 turkey tags could annually be eligible in excess of allotted turkey permit levels. Time periods and zones for which these turkey tags are issued cannot be exactly predicted, however it can be safely assumed the impact of these additional tags will likely be magnified due to the fact tags for the *first two* time periods of the turkey season are the most highly sought-after and tags issued under this bill will *likely* be sold for these earlier time periods. The Department is ready and willing to provide the bill author assistance to refine a process that achieves the bill author's intent without oversubscribing Wisconsin's turkey population.

resident  
non-res.  
if just  
resident,  
would  
be approx.  
6,000

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to speak to you about this bill today. I hope you find this information helpful. Scott Walter, DNR Upland Game Biologist, is with me here today and we are happy to try answering questions you may have regarding AB 187.





Testimony of Rep. Dianne Hesselbein  
Committee on Natural Resources and Sporting Heritage

July 10, 2015

Chairman Ott and members of the Committee:

Thank you for holding this public hearing and inviting me to speak in support of AB 187.

As many of you are aware, the return – the rebounding -- of the wild turkey is a great Wisconsin success story. Since the turkey was re-introduced in 1976, its population has increased dramatically. We even see them crossing Williamson Street in Madison, not far from the Capitol!

Last year, more than 200,000 resident and non-resident hunters participated in the spring and fall wild turkey hunts.

The bill before us would give a small perk to the tiny fraction of resident Wisconsin turkey hunters who are disabled veterans and recipients of the Purple Heart medal. It would allow the Department of Natural Resources to issue turkey licenses and tags directly to disabled veterans and Purple Heart medalists.

Why are we doing this? It is a small way of saying “thank you” for veterans’ service and physical sacrifice.

How many people are we talking about? Probably few thousand out of a pool of 205,000. DNR figures show that:

- In 2014 there were a total of 3,899 veterans with 70 percent disability who qualified for a resident disabled fishing permit.
  - In 2014 there were 1,113 disabled veterans with 50 percent disability who qualified for a disabled veteran recreation card.
  - And in 2014 there were 858 Purple Heart recipients who qualified as resident Purple Heart conservation patrons.
  - There were also 11 non-resident Purple Heart conservation patrons.
- Based on these figures, a maximum of about 5,800 individuals could qualify for the disabled veteran and Purple Heart privilege. Not all of them would take advantage of it.

I talked to several disabled veterans last week at the VFW State Convention in Wausau, and said it would give a nice boost to disabled hunters who live every day with their service-related injuries.

Please join me in supporting A.B. 187. Thank you for your attention.



# Military Order of the Purple Heart

Department of Wisconsin



June 10, 2015

**Members of the Assembly Committee on Natural Resources and Sporting Heritage;**

I appear before you today as a proud Purple Heart recipient of the War in Iraq, a disabled veteran, and the State Legislative Officer for the Military Order of the Purple Heart-Department of Wisconsin. The MOPH, and I personally, wish to express support for AB 187-relating to an exemption for disabled veterans and recipients of the Purple Heart Medal from the cumulative preference system for issuing wild turkey hunting licenses and tags.

Wisconsin has long been a great state to be an outdoorsmen and a veteran. AB 187 allows you to continue this tradition in a very honorable and worthwhile way. I wish to thank Chairperson Ott, Vice-Chair Quinn, and all members of the committee for taking the time to hear this bill today. I wish to also express special gratitude to Representative Dianne Hesselbein for introducing this bill, and the support of the Assembly co-sponsors, Representatives Petryk, Skowronski, Ballweg, Barca, Berceau, Bernier, E. Brooks, R. Brooks, Considine, Danou, Edming, Genrich, Hebl, Horlacher, Jacque, Jorgensen, Kitchens, Kleefisch, Kolste, Kulp, T. Larson, Mason, Murphy, Mursau, Ohnstad, Quinn, Ripp, Sinicki, Thiesfeldt, Tittl and Zepnick. This impressive list of co-sponsors in and of itself shows the extensive bi-partisan support for passage of this legislation. I applaud them all, many of who sit on this committee, for their continued support and gratitude shown to our state's disabled veterans and Purple Heart recipients.

At this time, with the permission of the Chair, I would like to read to you two written testimonials in support of AB 187 that were shared with me with the request they be put in to the committee record today. I have provided these two testimonials from Dr. Todd Bohm and Purple Heart recipient Matt Tennesen for you to follow along if you wish.

Thank you,

Jason E. Johns  
MOPH-State Legislative Officer

June 10, 2015

**Dear Members of the Assembly Committee on Natural Resources & Sporting Heritage;**

My name is Todd J. Bohm and I reside at 3176 Martin Road, Mosinee. I am writing in support of Assembly Bill 187 – turkey tags for Purple Heart Veterans

I have been an associate for an organization called Wounded Warriors in Action for the past seven years. Wounded Warriors in Action was founded in 2007 by retired Army Lt. Colonel John McDaniel with the purpose of providing world -class hunting and fishing experiences to Purple Heart wounded veterans from the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts. Since the onset of these conflicts in the early 1990's over 57,000 veterans have returned wounded to the United States. The major mission of Wounded Warriors in Action is to use the healing powers of the outdoors and the sports of fishing and hunting to provide healing for these veterans.

Seven years ago, my family & I began offering "Cast and Blast" weekends for these Purple Heart heroes through Wounded Warriors in Action. We offer these heroes turkey hunting and fishing opportunities that take place in mid -to -late May in Central Wisconsin because of the lack of availability of leftover turkey tags for these heroes. Since 2009, we have hosted 23 wounded veterans from many states across the United States. The impact of a weekend hunting and fishing with fellow Purple Heart recipients is amazing. For many of these veterans who have undergone countless surgeries, rehabilitation, and counseling, this trip impacts them for the rest of their lives. The healing powers of the great outdoors and the ability to spend time with fellow veterans in an environment they love is the therapy they desperately need.

Assembly Bill 187 would provide more flexibility for us in scheduling these hunts for our wounded heroes. Currently, we have to rely on leftover tags at the end of the season which typically results in hot temperatures, scheduling conflicts (Mother's Day, opening of fishing season), and birds that have been hunted for up to six weeks previous. As a result, we have had limited success on our hunts. Assembly Bill 187 would allow us to schedule these hunts earlier, thus providing a more successful & comfortable hunt for our veterans.

I realize some may be concerned about diluting the lottery tag system, but the impact of Purple Heart recipients utilizing this benefit from the state would be minimal and is just one small way of saying "Thank You".

Dr. Todd Bohm  
Associate; Wounded Warriors in Action

June 10, 2015

**Honorable Members of the Assembly Committee on Natural Resources and Sporting Heritage Committee;**

My name is Matt Tennesen and I live in Kimberly, WI. I am writing this letter in support of Assembly Bill 187.

I was deployed to Afghanistan from November 2008-December 2009. My job in Afghanistan was to find the Improvised Explosive Devices (IED's) and while on mission I was blown up by four of these. My platoon saw combat on a daily basis and I lost a good buddy, Sgt. Ryan Adams, to an enemy RPG while doing route clearance. I have numerous physical issues (eight surgeries) and mental issues from my injuries suffered during the deployment.

Upon my return I struggled to re-integrate into society. I shut myself in my home and drank alcohol to cope with my issues. I was having a lot of marital and legal issues because of this. I had no idea what I could do that would help me with these issues.

Prior to my deployment, I basically grew up spending as much time in the outdoors as I possibly could. Upon my return I had no desire to hunt, fish or be in the woods. Thankfully there was an organization that used the outdoors to heal Veterans like me. I received an email from my Platoon Sergeant about an organization called Wounded Warriors In Action (WWIA). I decided that I needed to try something different because I was not heading in a good direction.

The event that WWIA asked me to attend was a turkey hunt in Wausau. They had another veteran mentor me while on the event. His name is Josh Krueger and I am still in contact with him today. The event was organized and hosted by Todd Bohm. Todd and his family did an excellent job of making me feel thanked and honored for my service. Todd was also a top shelf turkey guide and I was able to get my first turkey ever! Being out in nature with a fellow veteran, a great guide and the hospitality the Bohm family showed towards me made a difference in my life. If it were not for that trip I would not be writing this testimony. It changed my way of looking at the issues I had and how to deal with them. Since that event I have found healing in nature and helping out fellow Veterans who are in the same place I was at that time. I am now proud to say I am an Associate and mentor with the WWIA.

One of the biggest challenges that we face in getting disabled veterans scheduled for a turkey hunt is the tight schedule on getting spring turkey hunt preferences in once we identify who can attend. We currently have to purchase the left over tags for the end of the season. By then it is typically warm and most of the turkeys are done mating. The quality of the hunt is diminished and we are not offering disabled veterans the best quality hunt that we could if was earlier in the season. Real healing occurs in nature and AB 187 is a great tool in supporting this.

Thank you for your hearing and consideration of this great legislation. I look forward to it becoming law.

Matt Tennesen  
156 Darboy Rd.  
Kimberly, WI