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STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 87TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Testimony in Support of Assembly Bill 416
Assembly Committee on Environment and Forestry
Tuesday October 3, 2017

Mr. Chairman and committee members, thank you for holding this public hearing today and giving me the opportunity to speak to you in support of Assembly Bill (AB) 416. I would like to thank Senator Petrowski for working with me on this important legislation.

Deer hunting is one of Wisconsin's most important sporting traditions. Thousands of Wisconsinites take to the woods each fall throughout the various deer hunting seasons. Prior to the hunt, many hunters invest a great deal of time, energy, and money preparing for the season. When someone illegally harvests a deer, they are depriving a law-abiding hunter of an opportunity.

Hunters also provide an important economic boost to many small businesses around our state. As a small business owner in northern Wisconsin, I have seen this impact first-hand. Actions that negatively impact hunting also harm the many businesses who depend on hunting related business.

One of the penalties that can be imposed for poaching a deer is the wild animal protection surcharge. However, the maximum amount that can be imposed under current law is only \$43.75, regardless of the age or size of the animal. AB 416 increases the penalties under the wild animal protection surcharge for the illegal taking of trophy deer. Under this bill, the maximum penalty would increase to \$2,000 for a deer with antlers measuring between 125 and 149 inches, \$5,000 for a deer with antlers measuring between 150 and 169 inches, and \$10,000 for a deer with antlers measuring 170 inches or more.

These increased penalties are necessary because currently, the reward for poaching a trophy deer far outweighs the risks. Poachers are able to make thousands of dollars on the black market selling antlers and other parts of a trophy buck. For example, a 2012 article from the Los Angeles Times said, that according to breeders, a sample of semen from some bucks could sell for as much as \$35,000. Increasing the penalties for poaching trophy bucks would provide a greater deterrent to those who engage in these illegal activities.

Mr. Chairman and members, I ask for your support of AB 416 and thank you again for the opportunity to testify before you today.



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Good morning, as Secretary of the Wisconsin Conservation Congress I would like to thank chairman Mursau and the Assembly Committee on environment and Forestry for the opportunity to come before you in support of AB416.

The WCC supports updating state statute to better reflect the monetary values of fish and wildlife species in Wisconsin. With exception of the current value of elk at \$2000 none of the other values have changed since the statutes creation in 1991. In 2015 the WCC ask the question "Do you support the state legislature review and adjust these values to higher values where appropriate?" That question passed by a vote of 2928 yes and 800 no, and passed in 71 counties and tied in one. We are all aware of the value of white-tailed bucks that grow large antlers. All one has to do is walk into a Cabela's or Bass Pro store to see many of these trophy animals harvested in Wisconsin. The stores pay hunter thousands of dollars to own those antlers and display them in a store. Further there are outfitters that also charge thousands of dollars for a hunter to have a chance at large whitetail bucks that are on lands they manage.

The proposed wild animal protection surcharge in AB416 is an accurate reflection of the value of these magnificent animals. The WCC offers it support of AB 416 and would like for the legislature to look further into Wisconsin State Statute section 29.983 to make sure all of the species have a wild animal protection surcharge that accurately reflects the value they have to Wisconsin.

Presented by Dale Maas WCC Secretary

Larry Bonde, Chair
Wisconsin Conservation Congress

As established by Wisconsin State Statutes, the Wisconsin Conservation Congress is officially recognized as the only natural resources advisory body in the state where citizens elect delegates to represent their interests on natural resources issues on a local and statewide level to the Natural Resources Board and the Department of Natural Resources. Their mission is to represent the citizens of Wisconsin by working with the Natural Resources Board and the Department of Natural Resources to effectively manage Wisconsin's greatest asset, our abundant natural resources, for present and future generations to enjoy.