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# PAUL TITTL

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STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 25<sup>TH</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Assembly Committee on Sporting Heritage

Assembly Bill 165

June 8, 2021

First of all, I would like to thank you, Chairman Pronschinske and committee members, for allowing me to testify before you concerning Assembly Bill 165 relating to combining the archer and crossbow hunting licenses.

This bill modifies the definition of archery in the statutes to include crossbow. The change allows someone with an archery hunting license to hunt with a bow and arrow or a crossbow.

This change aligns the archery hunting definition with the approach taken with gun hunting. For example, the gun hunting statute makes no distinction between hunting with a shotgun, rifle, or pistol. A hunter who purchases a deer gun hunting license may use either one. Similarly, there is no reason archery should be treated any differently.

Currently, we do not distinguish between longbow, recurve, or compound. Each one has made a significant impact on the harvesting of deer with a bow. When you buy an archery license you may hunt with a longbow, a recurve or a compound bow. However, as the equipment has progressed, we have not distinguished one from the other. Archery is archery.

The crossbow license was first offered in 2014, and the number of hunters with authority to use a crossbow has been increasing annually. The attached chart from the Department of Natural Resources provides licensing numbers since 1999.

Although the number of crossbow users has increased, Wisconsin has had a decrease in gun deer licenses during the last twenty years. That decline creates problems related to controlling our deer herd. It also hurts businesses, especially in the northern part of the state, which depend on hunters for a significant portion of their income.

Retired DNR manager, Tom Hauge, the director of wildlife management for 25 years, stated the decline in the number of hunters presents a serious long-term issue for conservation and deer control.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify before you today.

After Senator Feyen has testified, we will be pleased to take any questions you might have.

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Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources  
Licensing Information 1999-2019

Year	Total archery authorities	Total crossbow authorities	Total
2019	173,573	108,836	282,409
2018	186,329	95,532	281,861
2017	199,636	87,609	287,245
2016	204,512	62,680	267,192
2015	191,823	69,309	261,132
2014	198,957	52,137	251,094
2013	219,842		
2012	218,876		
2011	209,553		
2010	206,252		
2009	205,599		
2008	204,246		
2007	202,136		
2006	197,616		
2005	180,648		
2004	177,780		
2003	166,099		
2002	144,702		
2001	178,281		
2000	180,559		
1999	185,122		

Note these totals do not include the Resident Conservation Patron license, a combination license that includes Resident Gun Deer, Resident Archery, and Resident Crossbow authorities.



# DAN FEYEN

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## STATE SENATOR

18th Senate District  
(608) 266-5300  
Sen.Feyen@legis.wi.gov

PO Box 7882, Madison, WI 53707-7882  
<http://legis.wisconsin.gov/senate/18/feyen>

To: The Assembly Committee on Sporting Heritage  
From: Sen. Dan Feyen  
Re: Assembly Bill 165

Hello, Chairman Pronschinske and committee members. Thank you for taking time today to hear testimony on Assembly Bill 165.

The Wisconsin crossbow and archery seasons have been running concurrently since crossbows were first allowed for harvesting deer in 2014. This bill merely ties crossbows and vertical bows together, creating one combined season instead of two separate, identical seasons.

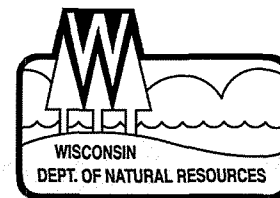
We do not differentiate between shotgun, rifle, muzzleloader, or pistol during the 9-day gun deer season nor do we differentiate between traditional archery equipment and compound bows. This is a commonsense restructuring that will simplify the archery season for hunters.

The two seasons were initially kept separate in order to study the effectiveness of crossbows, this bill does not limit the Department of Natural Resources in their ability to survey and gather this information.

Since crossbows were first allowed, we have not seen significant changes to the all-weapon yearly harvest. We have seen an increase in crossbow harvest that has coincided with the increase in crossbow license sales.

At a time when overall license sales are diminishing and there are fewer hunters in the woods, we do not want to limit one of the few hunting opportunities that is bringing new people to the sport or keeping people in the sport longer. Tying archery and crossbow seasons together ensures that these opportunities will continue to be available in Wisconsin.

Thank you again for your time and consideration. With that, I am happy to answer any questions.



## Assembly Committee on Sporting Heritage

### *2021 Assembly Bill 165*

#### *Combining the archer and crossbow hunting licenses*

*June 8, 2021*

Good afternoon Chair Pronschinske and members of the Committee. My name is Linda Olver and I am the Policy Advisor for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Bureau of Customer and Outreach Services. Joining me to assist in addressing questions is Scott Loomans, Policy Initiatives Advisor for the DNR Fish, Wildlife and Parks Division. Thank you for the opportunity to testify, for informational purposes, on Assembly Bill 165 (AB 165), related to combining the archer and crossbow hunting licenses.

AB 165 repeals the resident and nonresident crossbow hunting licenses from statute and adds the authority to use a crossbow to the archer hunting license so that only one license is required to hunt with a vertical bow or a crossbow. AB 165 repeals the requirement to purchase an “upgrade” for an additional \$3 to be authorized to hunt with either a vertical bow or a crossbow.

The provisions of AB 165 will simplify the license purchasing experience for hunters who wish to have the option to hunt with either a vertical bow or a crossbow, as only one approval will be required rather than two. AB 165 will also make the license sales experience more efficient for hunters, retail license agents and department staff by eliminating the need to explain and potentially add the \$3 “upgrade” product to the license sales transaction.

The department’s Bureau of Wildlife Management has confirmed AB 165 will not hamper the department’s data collection efforts, as the department will be able to calculate success rates by weapon type through deer hunter surveys. In addition, Wildlife survey staff believe deer hunter surveys will provide a better estimate than using license sales data as we can determine who is active and the primary weapon used and their success, regardless of license authority issued.

The department will incur one-time implementation costs to make necessary changes to the Go Wild system, train Customer Service Representatives and retail license agents, and update department web pages and hunting regulations. It would be most efficient and clearly understood by hunters and license agents if the provisions of this draft were to become effective at the start of a new license year (March 1). If AB 165 were to become effective after the start of a license year, the department would likely be asked to issue refunds on archer or crossbow license “upgrades” already sold and subsequently made obsolete. In addition, the department must undergo the administrative rule revision process to implement the provisions of AB 165.

The elimination of the crossbow license alone under AB 165 will not impact license revenue, as a hunter who previously purchased a crossbow license will now be required to purchase an archer license for the same license fee. The department will, however, annually lose revenue from the loss of sales of the “upgrade” products eliminated under AB 165. According to License Year 2020 sales data, more than

53,000 individuals (approximately 21% of all who purchased an archer or crossbow hunting license) purchased an archer or crossbow "upgrade" for the \$3 fee during the 2020 License Year. A portion of that \$3 fee is paid to agents through statutorily authorized issuing fees, but the majority of the fee (\$2.25) is revenue used for wildlife management purposes. Under the current provisions of AB 165, the department anticipates a decrease of more than \$119,000 in revenue annually.

The department respectfully requests consideration of two additions to AB 165 that would decrease department costs and time required to implement:

- 1) A one-time exemption from making a finding of emergency to write rules would help to facilitate timelier implementation.
- 2) A delayed effective date coinciding with the start of a license year (March 1) would eliminate the need to issue refunds. Further, a delayed effective date providing at least six months lead time would also allow for Emergency rulemaking (assuming Emergency Rulemaking authority was granted).

On behalf of the Department of Natural Resources, we would like to thank you for your time today. We would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Testimony of Mike Brust, Wausau, WI

Chairman Pronschinske, members of the committee. First of all, thank you for all you do to protect and enhance all the outdoor activities that we often take for granted.

I was very involved in the discussions that led to the 2013 "crossbow" bill that guaranteed the use of crossbows for everyone. But with Wisconsin considered by many as the birthplace of modern bowhunting, legislators were keenly aware of the need to preserve our bowhunting heritage, especially considering that bowhunting at that time was the only Wisconsin big-game hunting pursuit that was ~~showing increased hunter numbers year after year.~~

There was also concern, even then, that because crossbows were mechanically drawn and braced across a fixed stock, that their performance potential was almost limitless; while archery equipment, drawn by muscle power and held unsupported, had effectively reached its performance limits more than 10 years earlier.

In the years since, the concerns over increased crossbow effectiveness have been realized faster and to a greater degree than almost anyone anticipated.

Attached to my testimony that you have, is a 2019 ad for a Ravin crossbow, or as they put it: "Your Next Rifle". It indicates bolt speeds of 390 feet per second. It also touts 3 inch groups at 100 yards. However, in the 2 years since, Ravin, Ten Point and other crossbows are now propelling bolts at 450 to 500 fps. Others are advertising 1 inch groups at 100 yards. In comparison, all archery equipment tested at the state broadhead shoot averaged an arrow speed of 257 fps.; with few archers, if any, able to keep all 29 shots within a 4" bullseye - with target distances averaging only 22 yards and none over 29 yards.

There are now multiple shot crossbows, electronic and pneumatic cocking crossbows, and compact crossbows no longer than my arm.

However, perhaps even more significant may be the advances in electronic crossbow scopes. While modern crossbows are now as accurate as many deer rifles, their projectiles don't shoot as flat, so miscalculating distance or the corresponding hold could lead to errant shots. But no more. Also attached to my testimony is a description of the new Burris OracleX rangefinding crossbow scope. What it does, simply put, is laser ranges the target, calculates the drop, and instantly adjust the crosshairs for the exact aiming point out to 200 yards. Just squeeze the trigger. And that's just one model. There is also the Garmin XERO (250 yards) and the Sig Sauer BDX (125 yards) that do essentially the same thing.

Even in 2013 this body recognized that archery equipment and crossbows were two very different hunting tools that needed to be defined and regulated separately. Those differences have grown exponentially ever since, with no end in sight.

Crossbows are amazing technical machines that will, and should, be part of Wisconsin's hunting future – but they no longer resemble or perform anything like archery equipment, and they certainly shouldn't be lumped together. That is far more clear today than it ever has been in the past.

And so, I respectfully request that you do not support Assembly Bill 165 that seeks to undo what your predecessors so wisely put in place. Thank you.





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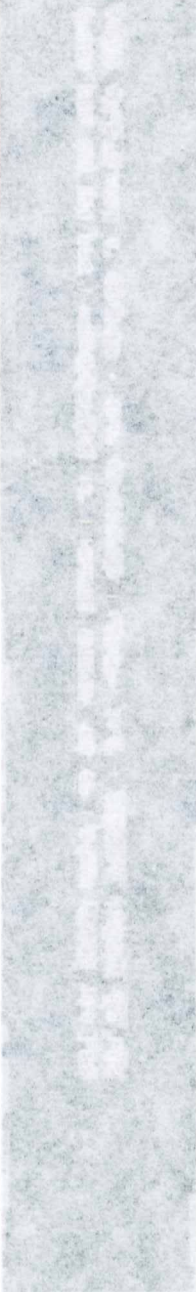
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Easy-to-reach buttons on top of the optic provide access to the intuitive menu for set up and programming. The Oracle X can be programmed for two different bolt set ups for added versatility. Auto brightness and manual override allows you to easily fine tune the display brightness. An integrated bubble level ensure

accuracy at longer distances. The optic is powered by a CR123 battery and will last for 3,000+ power cycles. An integrated mount provides quick attachment to picatinny or Weaver-style rails. The Oracle X is lightweight and robust enough to withstand any weather condition (waterproof, shock-proof, fog-proof).

The Burris Oracle 2 and Oracle X are both backed by the company's Forever Warranty. For more information, visit [www.burrisoptics.com](http://www.burrisoptics.com).

By **JON E. SILKS**



*TenPoint's Havoc RS440 XERO takes aiming precision to the next level thanks to the Garmin XERO X1i laser-rangefinding crossbow scope.*

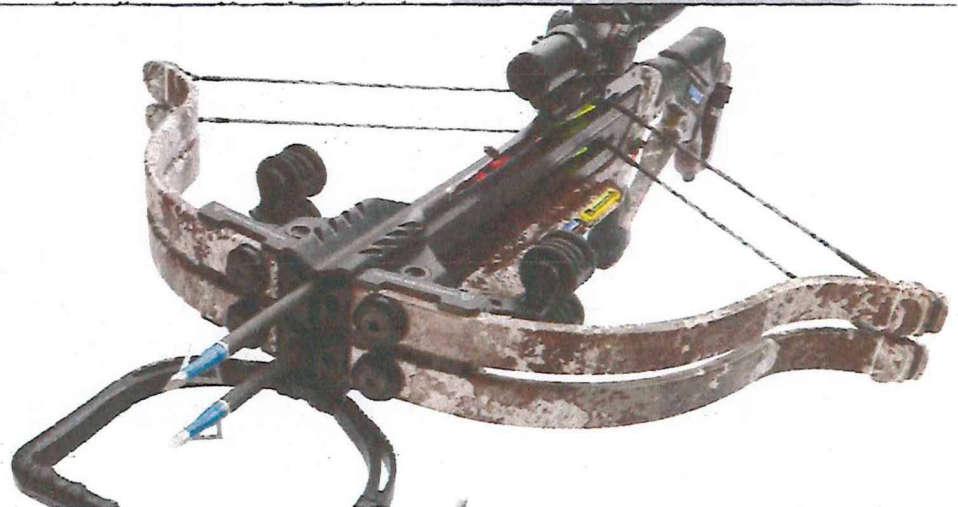
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to the next level thanks to the genuine YEMA Y11 best-  
TempPoint's Havoc US-40 YEMA takes shining precision



JOHN E. SIKES

can't easily live with the quality differences. You insisted people don't waste  
pay for the job, spend everything. Vito, piggyback and manual override allow

Each of these options on top of the other provide access to the industry's most

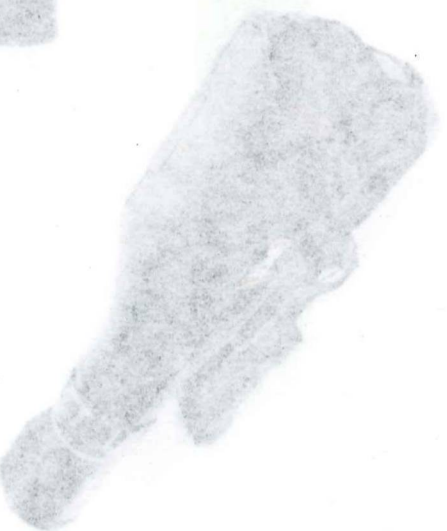
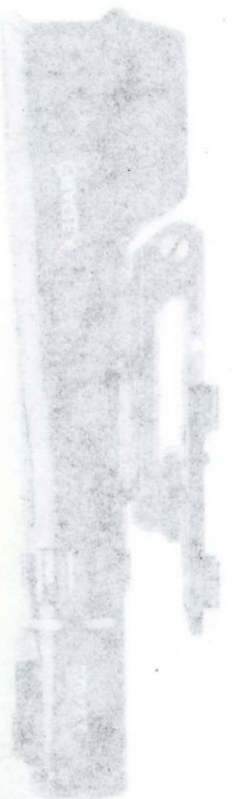
operation and cost cut. An integrated independent injector in the center of the  
right foot to 200 yards) and instantly provides an exact aiming point, for both  
on the bottom of the handle, the Oracle X provides the exact distance to your  
a built-in laser level. When you dig your target with the wireless remote,  
the new Oracle X (2000) is a 3-1/2 variable-speed crossover score that features

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The Oracle Oracle 5 and Oracle X are built packed by the company's former

lightweight and weather condition (waterproof shock-proof fog proof)  
the quality of YEMA's/YEMA's. The Oracle X is lightweight and super sturdy, is  
built for 2-1/2" & heavier chains. An integrated manual override disk attachment is  
connected at longer distances. The right is powered by a CR12 battery and will

CROSSOVER SCORER  
ORACLE X MANAGER



MEME015051



Testimony of Dave Peterson, West Salem, WI

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. Thank you for considering my testimony today regarding Assembly Bill 165.

I would like to begin by re-stating the definition of archery equipment as it exists in Wisconsin through both lesser weapon and current deer season structures. That being that archery equipment is defined as being drawn by hand, held entirely using the strength of the body. This definition does not include crossbows. Many try to compare traditional archery equipment with modern compound bows and state that compounds are more similar to crossbows. This is not the case, as the fundamentals of shooting either traditional bows or compound bows are both consistent with the definition of archery equipment. And stating that accessories like releases or sight pins separate these two bow types is a misleading statement. Both releases and sight pins were manufactured in Wisconsin as early as 1950, for use on traditional archery equipment.

Crossbows do not fit the definition of archery equipment. And with advertising tag lines like "Meet Your Next Rifle" I suspect most crossbow manufacturers don't think their products are just another form of archery equipment either. Almost all crossbows are now mechanically drawn, some even electronically at the push of a button and are braced across a rigid stock, with both characteristics giving them almost unlimited power potential. They are pre-loaded so all that is required at the time of the shot is to pull the trigger. They are often shot from a rest, some with built-in bipods, which allows accurate shots to well past 100 yards. Almost all crossbows now come with scopes, many now calibrated with defined aiming points out to 100 yards – and well beyond.

In 2013 when crossbows were allowed into Wisconsin's deer hunting season the legislature showed great wisdom by keeping the two weapon types separate. They recognized at the time that these two weapon types are not equal. The differences are even greater today and that gap is likely to continue to widen. Even the most high-tech compounds of today all rely on the limiting factor of a human power stroke to operate them. Not so with crossbows, which are not bound by this significant limitation.

Keeping archery equipment and crossbows separate will allow the DNR to continue to gather statistics about participation, safety and success rates by each weapon type. At the end of the day, most sportsmen just want a fair and equitable chance at harvesting a whitetail. Keeping Wisconsin's archery, crossbow and firearms seasons separate allows the DNR to manage our deer herd by fact, rather than by making broad brush assumptions.

In closing, I again thank you for your time today in consideration of my testimony. I urge you to maintain the current separation of the archery and crossbow deer seasons, putting sound management and an equitable distribution of the resource as a first priority.

## REGARDING Assembly Bill WI AB 165 2021-2022

Chairman Pronschinske, members of the committee. Thank you for taking the time and for giving me the opportunity to voice my opinion and concern regarding the topic at hand. This is my first time speaking in front of the assemblage and hope you forgive any errors in protocol I might make.

I have been informed that the State Assembly will be voting on a bill which would, in essence, cause the DNR to combine the archery and crossbow licenses. Although I have seen nothing (yet) in the news better explaining the proposal, I am very concerned. Why?

Well. I myself am a long time archer / bowhunter. I am very involved in the endeavor, am an officer in the Wisconsin Traditional Archers state archery organization and am a member in several out of state, and national bow hunting groups. I recreate and hunt with a longbow, often one that I myself built...talk about extremes here.

Although I myself have no use for crossbows, others evidently do, and I am in no position to tell them that they cannot do so. I have no animosity towards these folks, they get to do things too. It is fair.

That having been said....I feel that, although the DNR and whomever else was involved at the time, did the right thing, the only logical thing, when they both allowed crossbows to be used in Wisconsin hunting AND kept them separate from the rest of archery, this current move is a potential problem. There is a reason for this statement and that is clearly shown in the historical data.

Simply put... it is shown, via the data collected by the DNR because they DID separate the two endeavors, that the success rate of crossbows far exceeds that of "regular" archery, and in fact, appears, in more recent data years, to exceed that of firearms hunters. No doubt it is a deadly tool combined with a very long season. A season that includes rut and pre-rut periods which, to those that are non-hunters, is a time of increased deer movement and possible hunter success opportunity. Crossbow numbers are growing and equipment keeps getting better and better, as others will describe. They COULD be a game changer in terms of our seasons.

Many of us can remember days when we as archers had one tag only. The herd dynamics called for that play at those times. Currently we have increased opportunity, although a large portion of the state has much restrictive harvest rules in place. The herd dynamic calls for that play. Rules can and should be put in place by the governing authorities in order to limit harvest to sustainable numbers, yet allow maximum user time in the field. The point here is that, based upon facts, the DNR must make decisions that affect hunters, directly and indirectly.

Sustainable harvest and maximum user time afield. These parameters are influenced in part by the total numbers of actual reported harvest and the rate of success expectations. Archery hunting rate of success has been comparatively static. The DNR has many years of data at their hand to know this.

If....however.... crossbows are melded into the general archery season, it will skew our success rates and, if in the future, the times dictate a tightening of harvest or use parameters, the entirety of archers will, by necessity, be affected. I see no other way.

When pondering the rationale as to WHY this change is being pushed when crossbows currently have the same season length as other archers, the ONLY reason that I can see is to create one unified archery group which by default will keep crossbow users, with their higher rate of success, from being more tightly restricted than the rest of the archers, should the future need arise.

In closing, I ask you to review these points and to make the vote to... yes allow continued crossbow use, but to keep the license, the use / success tracking data, and more importantly the endeavor itself separate from the more traditional archer group.

ChuckC

Charles Cote  
3941 Sunnyvale Drive  
DeForest WI 53532



Dear Representative Pronschinske,

I am writing this letter to you, as you are the Representative for Buffalo County where I and my family farm and hunt on our 800 plus acres of land, and as you are the Chairman of the Assembly Sporting Heritage Committee where **AB 165** will have a hearing tomorrow.

**I am in support of this bill** as it is written to include the crossbow season with the archery season in order to consolidate the seasons. I recently read an article in the Wisconsin Bow Hunters (WBH) magazine where they included a letter that was sent to several of your colleagues arguing against it and using their member numbers of 4,200 making it appear that all their members are against this proposal. This is not true. I am a member of the WBH because my bow club mandates WBH membership in order to be a member of my local club, but I and other WBH members support this bill as do many of my other local club members. We recently surveyed our membership and there is a significant percentage of our local bow club members who are WBH members that hunt with a crossbow. WBH has not asked it's general membership for their opinion on this legislation.

This argument over crossbows has hurt the hunting community and must come to a stop, and we need to move on. It will not take much longer, and the anti-hunters will seize the opportunity of the infighting to reduce our hunting opportunities even more. As an owner of hundreds of acres of prime deer hunting land where 9 friends and family members bow hunt each year, using compound bows and crossbows, I have no problem with what their choice is, as it is their choice. It is obvious that for every shot taken with a crossbow the kill and retrieval percentage is very high, whereas there is a higher percentage of lost animals for every shot taken with compound bows. I use both the compound bow and the crossbow when I hunt depending on my stand. So, I am not speaking from just a crossbow user standpoint.

This current argument from the vertical bow hunters against the horizontal bow hunters is not that much different than when the compound bow came on the market years ago. Many archers at that time argued that the compound bow would be the end of bowhunting, and it would do many of the things that the anti-crossbow hunters are arguing about today. It is unfortunate that we have not learned from our past that change is not all bad. I think that the numbers show that we have found a hunting activity that is enjoyed by many and has gained a significant following while other types of hunting are going backwards in their numbers. This bill needs to be supported not only for crossbow/archery hunting, but for herd management, tourism, and the future of hunting. Many people that I know did not hunt or were ready to quit hunting due to age, medical reasons or the lack of interest, but have now taken on hunting with a crossbow, and are a key part of our increase hunter numbers in the state and the increased economic impact that they provide.

In closing I need to say that I am a gun hunter also and neither I or any of the 21 gun deer hunters hunting on our land have any problem with the numbers of deer that the

archery/crossbow hunters are taking. One only needs to understand the land ownership changes, CWD effects and to look at how deer are hunted today with very few drives and smaller bucks being passed up for the trophy bucks during the gun season, to understand why the gun buck deer season kill is down.

I am unable to attend your hearing, but wish my comments to be part of the record in favor of AB 165.

Thank you for your time.

***William Engfer***

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Also William Engfer W1436 Rose Valley Road Cochrane, WI 54622

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