

Chairman Kruen, Members of the Committee,

For the record my name is Curt Decker and I am a lifelong resident of North Dakota and live in Dickinson. I'm a concerned sportsman who is in opposition to HB 1120. I'm in opposition to this bill due to its inequity and potential consequences that the bill contains.

Please don't misunderstand my intentions. I'm not against our veterans obtaining a hunting license. I'd be honored to take these individuals on a hunt. What concerns me is the potential effect this bill would have on a stressed lottery system and to the recruitment of new young hunters, and the retention of hunters in our existing hunting fraternity.

By deducting another 100 tags from the lottery it reduces an individual's chances to obtain a tag from year to year, and HB 1120 is not just a one time opportunity, it will be a continuous deduction from available general public tags for years to come. It starts to discourage individuals from participating in the lottery when they must wait for years to acquire a tag. Depending on the deer hunting unit, and the sex or species of the deer an individual chooses to apply for (*and bad luck*), it can take up to seven or eight years, if not longer in some cases for a sportsman to acquire a desired tag. Continually being unsuccessful is starting to deject hunters to the point of taking up other hobbies and interests.

The big game animals of this state are a very limited resource that belong to all of us, and we should all be held to the same standards in acquiring the opportunity to harvest these wonderful creatures.

Furthermore, putting a five-day gun season ahead of the youth season in early September is inappropriate for several reasons. First, why would you want to try and get ahead of the youth and deprive them of their first-time experience and opportunity to harvest a deer. I would hope that an older experienced hunter would have enough common courtesy to let the youth have an unhindered opportunity, even if that hunter were a disabled vet. Secondly, what was the intent of the author of the bill? Was it truly to give the hunter an opportunity to have an unconstrained hunt or was it to take advantage of an undisturbed deer heard in anticipation of killing a trophy buck while in velvet?

Passing HB 1120 would also set a precedent by encouraging other special interest groups to submit white-hat bills which request special treatment, which again would reduce available tag numbers and put additional pressure on the deer lottery system. Soon all we will have in the field will be landowners and special interest groups. This a disservice to the tax paying sportsmen of this state who live here for the wonderful outdoor opportunities it provides.

The following information is relative to the above-mentioned discussion and pressures that the lottery system faces.

ND G&F, 2020 Deer Lottery Stats

- 2020 – 69,050 deer gun licenses.
- 79,999 – Number of people – not including 12,130 gratis applicants – who applied for deer gun lottery licenses, (up from 78,582 in 2019).
- 53.11% – The percent of successful applicants, excluding gratis and nonresidents, for deer gun and muzzleloader licenses.
- 12,446 – Applicants with four or more bonus points.

Drawing a buck license in 2020 was, like most years, not easy. After 11,845 resident gratis licenses and 690 nonresident licenses were subtracted from the overall license allocation, **just 28,598 buck licenses were available for the 67,665 hunters** who applied for them as their first choice in the lottery.

Additionally, rather than passing HB 1120, there are alternatives for a disabled veteran to obtain a deer tag.

Under Title 20.1 of the ND Century Code, the following chapters provide alternatives for disabled vets to obtain a deer license rather than an additional 100 guaranteed annual tags being deducted from the lottery system. Chapter 20.1-03-11, #6. allows a disabled individual to apply for a deer license through the lottery system and gives that qualified individual the flexibility to harvest the deer of his choice. This would allow a disabled vet the same opportunity that they would receive under HB 1120. This alternative allows for some fairness to an already stressed system by having all hunters applying for a license through the lottery system.

CHAPTER 20.1-03 LICENSES AND PERMITS

20.1-03-11. License to hunt big game required - Limitations on licenses.

6. A person who is unable to step from a vehicle without aid of a wheelchair, crutch, brace, or other mechanical support or prosthetic device or who is unable to walk any distance because of a permanent lung, heart, or other internal disease that requires the person to use supplemental oxygen to assist breathing and who receives or obtains, whether issued by lottery or otherwise, a license to hunt deer, is entitled to convert one license to take any sex or species of deer in the unit or subunit for which the license is issued. Notwithstanding any other law or any provision contained in the governor's proclamation concerning the hunting of deer, a person who is unable to step from a vehicle without aid of a wheelchair, crutch, brace, or other mechanical support or prosthetic device or who is unable to walk any distance because of a permanent lung, heart, or other internal disease that requires the person to use supplemental oxygen to assist breathing is entitled to apply for a license to hunt deer regardless of whether that person received a license to hunt deer in any prior year.

There are also nonprofit groups that are supplied deer licenses under state laws that offer opportunities to injured and disabled veterans to hunt deer.

CHAPTER 20.1-05.1 SPECIAL ALLOCATION HUNTING LICENSE

20.1-05.1-01. Special allocation hunting license authorization.

1. The director shall authorize issuance of the following annual special allocation hunting licenses:
 - a. Four any deer licenses and six any white-tailed deer licenses per year to the Injured Military Wildlife Project of North Dakota for distribution. A license issued under this subsection is valid during the period of the deer bow season.

Note: The ND G&F Dept. also allows for approximately 50 licenses for veterans to hunt deer at Camp Grafton.

In conclusion Chairman Kruen and members of the Committee, I urge you to vote "Do Not Pass" on HB 1120.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter,

Sincerely,

Curt Decker