

Wednesday February 5, 2014

Fish and Wildlife Committee Testimony Regarding H.589 Section 4741

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Thank you to the Committee for letting me speak.

I am here today to speak in reference to Bill H.589, Page 7, and the proposal to repeal Section 4741, Lines 17-21, which transfers decision making authority on critical issues relating to the conservation, health and viability of OUR DEER HERD.

If the change to this statute occurs it will allow the appointed members of the Fish and Wildlife Board to set the number of days for deer hunting and the bag limit. In my opinion, this would take these important conservation issues away from Vermont's elected, accountable legislators and give full decision making powers to an appointed Board with no direct voter accountability.

With all due respect to the Board, the only qualification for being appointed to the Board is that the governor is required to appoint one person per county. As you can see in the statute, there is no requirement that any Board Appointee possess any special knowledge that ensures the decision as to bag limit and season length is being made based on expertise as to the animal populations, herd management and ecology. That is a very big chance to take in management of a game herd. If there were some assurance that the Board would be comprised of people with the balance of expertise required to make these decisions, then maybe this would be a viable statute. But currently, there is no such assurance.

Also of importance to me, and other Vermonters that I have talked to about this issue, is our right to discuss statutes, and any possible changes, directly with our elected officials in public meetings. I for one do not want to only be able to discuss a proposed statute with people who are not elected or accountable to elected legislators. I therefore respectfully request that Section 4741 remain unaltered.

Thank you to the Chair and the rest of the Committee Members, and the Board, for their time and hard work.