

ATTN: Committee on Energy and Natural Resources

RE: Non-resident Hunting/Fishing Licenses for North Dakota National Guard Service Members.

Dear Respected Members of the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources:

I wanted to formally express my support for potential legislation regarding hunting/fishing licenses for non-resident Service Members of the North Dakota National Guard. Before I go on, I would first like to introduce myself. My name is Jason Erickson and I am currently a resident of Breckenridge, MN. I grew up for a good part of my childhood on my grandparents' farm near Hankinson, North Dakota, and I attended North Dakota State University for my undergraduate degree and the University of North Dakota for my graduate degree. For the past nine years I served with the Minnesota National Guard, and just recently transferred to the North Dakota National Guard. North Dakota is as much if not more of home to me than Minnesota.

Hunting and the outdoors are some of my most prized ways to spend my free time. However, that was not always the case. Up until about the age of twelve I really had no interest in hunting, as my father was never a hunter. That changed in 2006. In 2006, my older brother was deployed to Iraq for nearly 12 months. My brother and I used to always butt heads as he was older and would always pick on me, so we were not as close when I was young. Although he was a pain, I still really missed him when he was gone. I remember eagerly and impatiently waiting to receive letters from him in the mail. In his letters, he wrote that once he got back he was going to take me out hunting on my first hunting trip. I really could have cared less about hunting, but I was looking forward to the hunting trip because it meant spending time with him. That hunting trip is when my brother and I first really bonded. Ever since hunting and the outdoors have occupied a special place in my heart, and I love introducing it to new people and especially to fellow Service Members new to the sport.

A major reason I ended choosing to go to school in North Dakota, was not only because of the great education but also because of the resident hunting/fishing season length and prices available for non-resident students attending a North Dakota higher education institution. I cannot say enough great things about this program. This program helped me and many others make so many lifelong friends while at college. Thanks to this program we could all go out and bond and get to know each other better on a waterfowl or pheasant trip together, without the cost barrier and license length limitations and keeping us from going. I believe a similar program for North Dakota National Guard members would have an extremely positive impact on the readiness, *esprit de corps*, and health and well-being of the North Dakota National Guard and its members.

While serving in the Minnesota National Guard I witnessed first-hand the beneficial impact Minnesota legislation had regarding actively drilling Service Members of the National Guard and hunting privileges for non-resident Service Members. In Minnesota, active members of the Minnesota National Guard can purchase Minnesota hunting and fishing licenses at the Minnesota resident rate and with the same valid license period, regardless of residency. This was beneficial because a major way to integrate into the unit and spend time together was for Service Members to get together and out hunting or fishing to know each other better. This was especially beneficial

as a border state unit where we had many Soldiers that were residents of North Dakota apart of the unit. The North Dakota Soldiers were able to be welcomed into the unit hunting and fishing get-togethers without the higher cost of hunting/fishing licenses holding them back, especially for the often cash-strapped younger Soldiers. Additionally, I believe this helped with Service Member suicides as they were feeling included and able to participate with their fellow soldiers. It was great seeing non-resident Soldiers seeing that they too were appreciated by the state they have sworn to protect and serve. Lastly, Minnesota is not the only state to have implemented this sort of legislation. Washington State also has a similar program.

I believe a similar program in North Dakota would reap numerous positive benefits from legislation that would allow active North Dakota Guard Service Members to purchase hunting and fishing licenses with the resident license periods and pricing. This would help integrate non-resident Service Members into the North Dakota National Guard and support building strong, close, cohesive bonds between the soldiers in a Unit. Which in turn supports military readiness. Further, this would be a great recruiting and retention incentive for the North Dakota National Guard. Additionally, this would help to lower suicide rates among Service Members because Service Members will not feel isolated, unappreciated, and unable to participate (due to cost and shorter licensing periods) in a great North Dakota pastime with their fellow soldiers in a state they have sworn to protect and serve.

In sum, I believe that resident pricing and license periods for actively serving North Dakota National Guard Service Members would be a beneficial and positive program in the Great State of North Dakota.

Thank you for your time and consideration on this matter.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jason Erickson", written in a cursive style.

Jason Erickson