



JOEL KLEEFISCH

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 38TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Assembly Bill 415

Relating to: Eliminating Back Tags

Assembly Committee on Natural Resources and Sporting Heritage

Thank you Chairman Ott and members of the Committee for holding a hearing today on Assembly Bill 415. Assembly Bill 415 will eliminate an unnecessary mandate placed on hunters all across the state.

Simply put, Assembly Bill 415 will remove the requirement that individuals wear a back tag while hunting. Wisconsin is one of only 2 states that still require the use of back tags while hunting.

Back tags are ineffective, costly and unnecessary. They are not visible from long distances, they are an added cost to the Department, and usually prove to be more of a burden to the hunter than a help to the public.

According to the fiscal estimate prepared by the Department of Natural Resources, this legislation will result in administrative cost savings. It is time we eliminate this unnecessary burden being placed on the hunting community and join the 21st century.

Once again, thank you for your time. If you have any questions or concerns I am happy to address them at this time.



Committee on Natural Resources and Sporting Heritage
2015 AB 415
Back tag requirements

Good morning Chairman Ott and committee members. My name is Matt O'Brien, and I am the law enforcement policy officer at the Department of Natural Resources. Thank you for the opportunity to testify, for informational purposes, as to the conservation components of AB415.

Law Enforcement

Under current law, back tags must be displayed by individuals hunting bear, deer, and elk. From the law enforcement perspective, a back tag number is occasionally a *component* of potential law violations either reported to law enforcement by citizens, or observed by law enforcement officers in the field. The potential violations may be related to hunting laws (enforced by state DNR wardens), trespass violations (enforced by local law enforcement officers, such as sheriff's deputies), or other criminal acts.

For investigations where a back tag number is included, law enforcement officers may be able to identify the suspect and close-out the investigation in a more efficient and consistent manner, as compared to investigations where the identity of the suspect is not established from a back tag. However, the Department does not track the number of natural resource cases where a back tag number is essential evidence, so the quantitative impact to DNR cases through removal of the back tag requirement is unknown.

Back tags additionally facilitate license compliance and warden license checks in the field. Under current law, wardens can occasionally gauge compliance with deer licensing requirements just by using binoculars to observe hunters in the field. Under AB415, wardens would no longer have a visual indicator as evidence of license possession, so more in-person *checks* would be needed to achieve a similar amount of compliance *checks*. Additionally under current law, the physical mechanics of in-person license checks are fairly simple, because hunters are carrying their licenses in similar places that are easily accessible. Under AB415, in-person license checks may cause hunters to search for their licenses in their bags or pockets, which may include digging through several layers of clothing during the cold winter hunts. From a hunter's perspective, this may increase the duration and unpleasantness of in-person license checks.

Under current law, the requirement to visibly display a back tag creates an apparent deterrent for hunting without a license. Removal of the requirement to display a back tag may indeterminately alter the number of hunters that elect to comply with the hunting license requirements.

Customer Service

This proposal would additionally remove the back tag reservation system, and the need to issue duplicate back tags to customers that misplace the original. Overall, this would reduce Department licensing expenditures, and may improve customer satisfaction for hunters that previously needed to expend time and money to obtain duplicate back tags.

I hope you find this information helpful, and would be happy to address any questions you may have.



Wisconsin Firearm Owners, Ranges,
Clubs and Educators, Inc.

Phone 888-337-3534
www.wisconsinforce.org

November 17, 2015

Assembly Committee on Natural Resources and Sporting Heritage

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Re: Back tag requirements. Assembly Bill 415

It is time to update current law by removing the unnecessary, burdensome requirement of issuing and displaying a back tag. Wisconsin is one of just a few states that uses this antiquated requirement.

It is our responsibility to work to ensure that unneeded regulation does not serve as an obstacle when experiencing our rich sporting heritage.

Wisconsin FORCE enthusiastically supports AB-415. Passing this legislation would greatly serve the citizens of Wisconsin. We encourage you to pass this bill.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Nass", written over the word "Sincerely,".

Jeffrey L. Nass
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Statement of Opposition to AB 415

Good afternoon Chairman Ott and members of the Natural Resources and Sporting Heritage Committee. I am Tom Thoresen, I have been a Wisconsin Resident all of my life and an avid hunter for over 48 of those years. I retired in 2005 after over 30 years of State Service of which over 26 were as a Conservation Warden. AB 415 is the wrong direction for conservation and hunting and I urge you to reject this bill for multiple reasons. It negatively effects the image of hunting, the reduction of trespass complaints and cooperation of private landowners, the bagtag assists in tracking deer hunting violations and promotes more full compliance of licensing of deer hunters.

Hunting and hunters depend on public support by non hunters for both their conservation and recreational efforts and especially to gain access to lands that are mostly in private ownership. The fact that hunting is a regulated and that deer hunters are in such high numbers especially during the 9 day deer gun season, make landowners concerned about who is on their land and identifiable. Much like license plates on vehicles identifies the owner of that vehicle, the bagtag gives an identification of the deer hunter. Wisconsin landowners want to control their own land from trespassing and be able to report violations of trespass and fish and game laws.

While most hunters are very responsible, the bagtag requirement helps reduce trespass. From my experience as a conservation warden, people who were hunting deer during the bow or gun season who didn't have a backtag were either trespassing or didn't have a license. I specifically recall 2 situations where I had licensed bowhunters who were hunting late and trespassing who not wearing a backtag. One had a backtag in their pocket and the other had left it in their vehicle. They admitted that the reason they didn't put on their backtag was that they knew they were going to be trespassing and didn't want to get caught.

Backtags truly assist Wisconsin Law Enforcement agencies during the deer hunting season. Violations of trespass, hunting violations or other crimes are both followed up on and prevented by backtags. It was 11 years ago this upcoming opening deer gun season weekend (November 21, 2004) that it was the required backtag that quickly help lead to the arrest in the violent murders of six people in Sawyer County. If it hadn't been for the backtag, the crimes would have taken much longer to solve and at much more risk to the public.

When backtags are required, more full license compliance that assist conservation efforts are achieved. It quickly identifies a person in the field carrying a firearm is more likely to have a license and draws attention to those not wearing a backtag and why the hunter isn't. Peer pressure to be licensed is stronger with a backtag requirement one of the reasons deer license compliance is quite high and fishing or small game license compliance is significantly lower.

Elimination of the backtag for deer hunting will hurt deer hunting on numerous fronts in Wisconsin. I urge you to reject AB 411. Thank You.

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11/17/2015

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November 17, 2015

Representative Alvin Ott, Chairman, and Committee Members of the
Wisconsin Assembly Natural Resources and Sporting Heritage Committee

Re: Opposition to 2015 Assembly Bill 415

I am opposed to AB 415 – the bill to eliminate the requirement for the DNR to issue and the requirement that the licensee attach a back tag to their hunting garment while hunting.

Why Issue and Wear a Back Tag:

1. The back tag lets everyone know that the hunter has purchased a license to hunt.
2. It is a means of identification of the hunter to other hunters, land owners and enforcement personnel which enables them to use the tag information when:
 - a. Reporting possible violations.
 - b. Reporting trespassing hunters to enforcement personnel.
 - c. Enforcement personnel:
 - i. Follow up on reported violations.
 - ii. Verify that the hunter is carrying a valid license issued to that hunter and not wearing someone else's back tag.
 - iii. Verify the reported trespass violation.
3. Not requiring a back tag will likely increase the likelihood that those wishing to hunt legally will do so. And, they will be able to do so in a much easier manner.
4. There is no cost savings by elimination of the back tag.

If you remove the back tag requirement you remove a valuable identification tool. Should there be no back tag it will be harder for land owners or other hunters to report possible violations or trespassing situations.

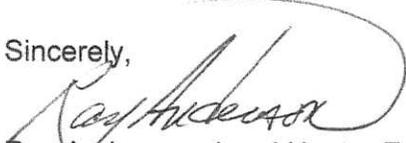
Many responsible hunters provide their back tag number to land owners so that they can keep track of those with permission to hunt on their land and identify those who don't.

Most Wisconsin Hunters wear their back tag with pride. When asked, many Conservation Patron, Junior Conservation Patron, Sports and Junior Sports license holders "show off" their license and explain their support for our hunting heritage.

Based on the fiscal analysis there is no cost reason to eliminate the back tag.

The bottom line is, if it "ain't broke, don't try and fix it."
Vote "NO" on this bill and retain the back tag requirement

Sincerely,



Ray Anderson - Lead Hunter Education Safety Instructor
Eleven Years – Certified Hunter Safety Instructor
Madison Area Safe Hunters Group
Life Member – Wisconsin Hunter Education Instructor Association

C: George Meyer, Executive Director, Wisconsin Wildlife Federation
Joe Lacenski, President, Wis. Hunter Ed. Instructor Association