



TERRY MOULTON



WISCONSIN STATE SENATOR

23RD SENATE DISTRICT

From: Senator Terry Moulton
To: Committee on Sporting Heritage, Mining and Forestry
Re: Testimony on Senate Bill 289
Relating to: back tag requirements
Date: December 9, 2015

Mr. Chairman and committee members, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today about Senate Bill 289 and back tag requirements.

Under current law, when the Department of Natural Resources issues a person a hunting, sports, or conservation patron license, they are also issued a tag to be worn on their back while hunting. There have been complaints that, in addition to being costly and noisy, the tags are ineffective and can be difficult to see from a distance. Senate Bill 289 would eliminate these tags and would bring Wisconsin in line with 48 other states that do not require back tags.

Several neighboring states, including Michigan, eliminated back tags over two decades ago. A 2002 study by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources examined the effects of eliminating back tags in Michigan. The study found that law enforcement in Michigan saw no increase in trespassing or other compliance issues. It is also important to note that under current law similar tags are not required for small game hunters, anglers, or several other licensed outdoor activities in Wisconsin.

Senate Bill 289 will eliminate a costly and unnecessary requirement for Wisconsin hunters. I ask you to please consider the passage of Senate Bill 289. Thank you again for allowing me to testify today.

Serving the 23rd Senate District



Wisconsin Firearm Owners, Ranges,
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December 9, 2015

Senate Committee on Sporting Heritage, Mining, and Forestry

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Re: Back tag requirements. Senate Bill 289

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 SB-289. 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 "Jeffrey L. Nass". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Jeffrey L. Nass
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Wisconsin Firearm Owners,
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Senate Committee on Sporting Heritage, Mining and Forestry
2015 SB 289
Back tag requirements

Thank you Chairman Tiffany and committee members for the opportunity to present information, for informational purposes, as to the conservation components of SB 289.

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 SB 289, 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 SB 289, 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.