

May 12, 2015

Game & Fisheries Committee

Public Hearing on HB231

Honorable Keith Gillespie, Chair

Mr. Chairman and Honorable Committee Members ---

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony at today's hearing on HB231. My name is Craig Ebersole, Treasurer of Lancaster County. I am a past president of the County Treasurer's Association of PA and the current chair of the "Antlerless Deer" committee within our state association. My remarks are as spokesperson for our state association.

On most occasions, I favor legislation that is brief as opposed to lengthy or convoluted, but in the case of HB231, its brevity, lack of implementation methodology, and carte blanche mentality are the most worrisome components. HB231 specifically mentions using the Pennsylvania Automated Licensing System (PALS). County Treasurers across this great have been using the PALS system (as mandated by the PGC) for many years, and have watched it crash, virtually every year. The Co-Sponsorship Memorandum that circulated prior to the introduction of HB231, said that "....in light of the recent updates to the Pennsylvania Automated Licensing system...." I hope there have been updates, and I hope that the updates are better than the updates to the PALS system that we have been promised over the last five years.

Last October 23rd, the County Treasurer's Association held a one day workshop in State College, where we heard from the Fish & Boat Commission, the Bureau of Dog Law, the Department of Revenue as it applies to Small Games of Chance, and the PA Game Commission. Speaking on behalf of the PGC was Mr. Anthony Frascella, Chief, from the Hunting License Division. As part of his presentation, he did mention HB2493 – which was last session's version of this bill, and he did mention that the PGC supported the bill. We inquired of him as to the distribution methodology of antlerless deer permits, IF the legislation were to be adopted, and County Treasurers cut out of the process. Mr. Frascella's answer was that nothing was in concrete and that they (the PGC) were "bouncing several ideas around." After the meeting, I contacted the PGC and offered to meet with them and work on a solution, rather than a continuation of them supporting a bill that throws us under the bus and we opposing becoming part of the road surface. No one returned my phone call. Only a few weeks ago, April 9th to be specific, Mr. Frascella attended our springtime one day workshop in State College. This time he told us about HB231 and how the PGC supported this bill. When asked once again about the distribution methodology and how it would benefit the hunter, the answer was, "we are bouncing a few ideas around." Nothing was certain --- because they would not know exactly what they would need to do, until the bill was passed and they had a chance to read it. I hope that was not an accurate statement, I hope that they have a plan, and simply did not wish to share their plan at that time. I hope their plan will benefit the hunters of our Commonwealth and not penalize our counties of \$750,000 in annual revenue, to the benefit of a large company in Arkansas.

But, if the plan was for all on-line sales, it would discriminate against the elderly, the poor and the "Plain" communities found in

Lancaster County and many other agricultural areas of the Commonwealth.

What is the future? Is the future always going to include 750,000 pink envelopes? Probably not. Should the future represent what is best for the hunter....absolutely yes. Have there been some snafus? Yes. Mostly in home rule counties with a system that fails to recognize hunters as constituents. Do your field offices get letters and phone calls every single week on some issue between a constituent and PenDot? Probably. Do you put bills in the hopper to take PenDot out of the equation.....no.

In HB231, the Pennsylvania Game Commission says PALS will handle the sales, PALS is the solution, their hope is that you will give the PGC a pass on the details. But, the devil will be in those details. Right now, it just feels like they want to wrestle antlerless deer permits away from the Counties and then develop a plan for step number two. We have seen this play before when the PGC changed their in-house regulations and had applicants send the pink envelopes to the PGC in Harrisburg, who then sorted them by WMU, and then mailed them in bundles of 100 to County Treasurers....that was actually a game plan for a brief period of time, until they realized that the temps they hired could not count to 100. Yes, we are concerned about the hunter, we are concerned about the details of distribution methods. Yes, we once again extend our hand to go the second mile with the PGC and send a small committee to meet with the PGC, share our knowledge and thoughts from decades of selling antlerless deer permits, and seeking an efficient, economical solution that works for all parties, but most importantly our shared constituent, the hunters of Pennsylvania.