

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

GAME AND FISHERIES COMMITTEE

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In Re:)
Public Hearing - New Saturday)
Opening Day of Rifle Deer)
Season)

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Mon Valley Career Tech Center
5 Guttman Boulevard
Charleroi, PA 15022
February 20, 2020
5:00 p.m.

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BEFORE THE GAME AND FISHERIES COMMITTEE:

Torren Ecker, Acting Majority Chairman
William Kortz, Minority Chairman
Gregory Raffensperger, Majority Executive Director
Steve McMillen, Minority Executive Director
Bud Cook
David Maloney
Barbara Gleim
Parke Wentling
Anita Kulik
Robert Merski

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Reported by:
Pamela J. Rose
Court Reporter

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I N D E X

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SPEAKERS:

Randy Santucci - Southwest Regional Director,
Unified Sportsmen of
Pennsylvania

Harold Daub - Executive Director,
Pennsylvania
Federation of Sportsmen and
Conservationists

Dennis Fredericks - Commissioner, District 2

Bryan Burhans - Executive Director,
Pennsylvania Game Commission

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P R O C E E D I N G S

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3 MR. ECKLER: Well, good afternoon,
4 Everybody. It's a privilege to be here today.
5 Thanks for coming out. It's a great turnout today.
6 As you can see, I am not Chairman Keith Gillespie.
7 Chairman Gillespie is a little under the weather
8 today, so he asked that I -- working down the chain
9 of command as secretary, I'm kind of filling in for
10 him today.

11 I'm Representative Torren Eckler. I
12 represent part of Adams and Cumberland Counties
13 kind of towards the other side of the state. It's
14 a privilege and an honor to be here today to talk
15 about these issues, and I really appreciate the
16 turnout today. This is a great opportunity.

17 Representative Bud Cook, thanks for
18 having us here. You know, we'll kick things off
19 here and get right into it.

20 Before we get started, I'd like to turn
21 it over to the minority chair here, Mr. Bill Kortz.
22 Go ahead.

23 MR. KORTZ: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As
24 he said, my name is Bill Kortz. I'm the state
25 representative from the 38th District here in

1 Allegheny County and I'm also the minority chair of
2 the committee.

3 First, I'd like to thank Chairman
4 Keith Gillespie for bringing this hearing down
5 here. This is a very important issue to talk
6 about. Being an avid hunter myself, I understand
7 the passion of this subject and I respect the
8 opinions on both sides.

9 So I'm looking forward to the testimony
10 this evening, but before I go any further, I would
11 like to recognize a couple of my old colleagues
12 that are here.

13 Former Representative,
14 Dave Leganski, who was chair of the Finance
15 Committee, is here and also former Representative
16 Rick Saccone is here.

17 Rick, thank you for coming also with
18 your lovely wife.

19 As I said, this is a very important
20 subject, and I'm glad Representative Cook wanted to
21 do this now. It's a very, very appropriate time to
22 do it. And as I've already stated, it is a very
23 passionate subject. So I understand that. I
24 respect the opinions of all sides.

25 So with that, I'll turn it over to you,

1 Mr. Chairman, so the members can introduce
2 themselves.

3 MR. ECKLER: Certainly. You know, I
4 don't think it would be appropriate if we didn't
5 let Representative Cook introduce himself and
6 welcome us to his district.

7 So Representative Cook.

8 MR. COOK: From the 49th District, parts
9 of Fayette and Washington Counties, the Mon Valley,
10 State Representative Bud Cook. I want to welcome
11 you all for being here.

12 This is indeed a very passionate
13 subject, very important to us. I'd like to let
14 people know we have approximately 19 sportsmen's
15 clubs in the district alone.

16 Monday hunting in the past has been the
17 state holiday every year right after Thanksgiving.
18 It's just amazing the impact and the passion that's
19 out there. E-mails for me have been running about
20 50/50 the last two weeks. Personally, I'm a
21 traditionalist. I grew up in the woods. You know,
22 Monday was always the day. So during the Sunday
23 hunting debate, we had an amendment on the table
24 regarding moving the start date back. We pulled
25 that back in order to get the Sunday hunting bill

1 across the line, but we did want to have this
2 conversation.

3 I appreciate everybody being out there
4 today. We appreciate your passion. We're trying
5 to get our arms around where do we go with it.

6 One of the other hats that I wear is the
7 secretary of the Travel and Tourism Committee in
8 Harrisburg. The change of the day had an impact on
9 travel and tourism up North. So it had a little
10 bit more impact than just the outdoors part.

11 So welcome to the 49th District, Folks.
12 We hope you'll come back. It's a great place to
13 live and work.

14 MR. ECKLER: Thank you, Representative
15 Cook, and thanks for hosting. It's a lovely
16 facility, and I appreciate the opportunity to be
17 here and talk about this issue.

18 At this time I'd like to kind of work
19 down the line here and have everybody introduce
20 themselves.

21 Representative Gleim, do you want to
22 start?

23 MS. GLEIM: Sure. I'm Representative
24 Gleim from Cumberland County, the 199th District.

25 MR. MALONEY: Representative

1 Dave Maloney from Berks County.

2 MR. MERSKI: State Representative
3 Bob Merski, 2nd Legislative District, Erie County.

4 MS. KULIK: Representative Anita Kulik,
5 45th Legislative District, Allegheny County, West
6 Hills.

7 MR. ECKLER: Great. Well, without
8 further adieu, why don't we get into this. We're
9 going to have three speakers today. We'll call you
10 up one at a time.

11 Let's start off with Mr. Randy Santucci,
12 Southwest Regional Director of the Unified
13 Sportsmen of Pennsylvania.

14 MR. SANTUCCI: Thank you.

15 MR. ECKLER: Thanks for being here.

16 MR. SANTUCCI: Okay, I guess we're ready
17 to roll? Okay.

18 First, I'd like to thank Chairman
19 Gillespie for the opportunity here, Representative
20 Kortz, Representative Cook, and the other
21 legislators that made the time to come here. I
22 really appreciate it.

23 Tonight I'm here representing the vast
24 number of hunters, camp owners and businesses that
25 remain opposed to the Saturday deer opener and have

1 suffered adverse impacts as a result of the change.

2 The Pennsylvania Game Commission's
3 decision to move the opening day from Monday to the
4 first Saturday after Thanksgiving was ill
5 conceived, unsubstantiated, damaged the sport and
6 tradition, produced direct and indirect harm to the
7 multitude of businesses that depend on that revenue
8 generated by hunters.

9 Furthermore, contrary to claims by the
10 Game Commission, the Saturday opener did not
11 increase hunting licenses for targeted groups in
12 any magnitude remotely comparable to the detriments
13 it caused, and I will provide evidence to that
14 effect.

15 I'm a 60-year-old hunter in
16 Pennsylvania. I served as president of the Unified
17 Sportsmen, a statewide sportsmen's organization, a
18 current member of three local sportsmen's clubs, as
19 well as a former member of the Governor's Advisory
20 Council under Governor Corbett for hunting, fishing
21 and conservation.

22 Changing the over half century structure
23 this weekend was a nonissue. Hunters never sought
24 a change to the opening day, and the idea never
25 surfaced until one PGC commissioner, Jim Daley,

1 floated this idea late 2018.

2 Since his initial support, Mr. Daley,
3 upon learning the entirety of the benefits
4 connected to the Monday opener, as well as hunter
5 opposition, he reversed his position. He later
6 resigned from the board when other board members
7 would not recognize the unanimous strong opinion
8 opposition data presented to the board. He stated
9 hurting one group to benefit another is never a
10 good idea. He was completely correct, and today he
11 is outspoken to go back to the Monday opener.

12 Commissioner discussion ensued at the
13 December 2018 working group meeting which displayed
14 a lack of not only understanding about certain
15 segments of Pennsylvania hunters but also a
16 flagrant disregard and irrelevancy for our core of
17 aging hunters.

18 When the PGC 2017 statewide hunter
19 survey results revealed a 65 percent hunter
20 opposition to changing the Monday opener, these
21 results were pointedly dismissed by the board, and
22 I quote, "This is just the old guys." Not just an
23 age discriminatory remark but troubling knowing the
24 median age of our hunters in Pennsylvania today is
25 nearly 52 years old. As a Pennsylvania hunting

1 license buyer for 48 consecutive years, I
2 personally did not appreciate my opinion being
3 rudely dismissed.

4 Camp owners and hunters, there was a
5 disdain that seemed to emerge then towards camp
6 owners and camp hunters. A lack of understanding
7 about this large segment of Pennsylvania hunters
8 was revealed with comments like "Come on, give me a
9 break. What does it take to open up a camp?
10 Unlock the deer and turn on the lights."

11 Commissioner Foradora stated, "Hunters just want to
12 get to camp Saturday to sit around and party."

13 The needs and traditions of camp hunters
14 were totally misrepresented. The drinking comment
15 was beyond the pale and insulted every serious
16 hunter. Hunters have fought that stereotype for
17 decades. It's bad enough we endure these types of
18 insults from nonhunters. Hearing them from agency
19 board members is a true slap in the face.

20 My mentioning these circumstances is not
21 from a malicious intent but to reveal to
22 legislators how badly the Saturday open decision
23 process was handled. I can forward the link to
24 this meeting to any legislator that cares to see
25 this troubling board discussion.

1 The January 2019 quarterly
2 commissioners' meeting followed. The board voted
3 unanimously 8 to 0 to change the most popular
4 opening day season structure of the most hunted
5 Pennsylvania game animal, the whitetail deer.

6 Deer hunting influences 90 percent of
7 Pennsylvania hunting license sales. Hunting drives
8 well over \$100 million in state and local tax
9 revenue. It contributes to tens of thousands of
10 jobs and provided revenue for thousands of
11 Pennsylvania businesses. You would think a state
12 agency would have done a regulatory impact analysis
13 on a change affecting so much and so many. The
14 balance of my testimony identifies the results from
15 this haphazard decisionmaking.

16 The next formal meeting of the Board of
17 Commissioners was in March 2019. The staff
18 members, Dr. Jagnow -- she was a Human Dimension
19 specialist -- and Derek Stoner, Hunting Outreach
20 specialist, presented survey science data to the
21 board boasting a 95 percent confidence level.

22 Categories like returning lapsed hunters
23 with a Saturday opener, identifying the primary
24 reason for hunters lapsing, and college-aged
25 student preferences were the topics researched.

1 These board assumptions were deemed unlikely to
2 completely refuted from these staff specialists.

3 Hunter opposition rolled in.

4 Approximately 1,300 hunters contacted the agency.
5 Eighty-one percent of those contacts opposed
6 changing the opening day.

7 Seeing the hunter opposition and staff
8 data ignored by the board, which are several of the
9 guidelines commissioners are remanded to follow by
10 their policy manual, and experiencing contacts with
11 hundreds of hunters strongly aligned in opposition,
12 I moved forward collecting data. A very telling
13 vote was taken at a meeting being held about CWD at
14 the East Freedom Fire Hall near Altoona March 9,
15 2019.

16 Now, if you look at your packet there,
17 there are two photos. One is marked No. 1 and one
18 is marked No. 2.

19 The question was asked, there were
20 approximately 280 hunters there, men and women --
21 mostly men but some women hunters also -- "How many
22 here do not want to see the opening day of the deer
23 season changed?" Committee members referenced the
24 photo marked with the 1. Now look at the one
25 No. 2. That was the inverse of that question

1 asking who wanted the Saturday opener. In that
2 particular circumstance, a picture is worth a
3 thousand words. It was practically unanimous out
4 of 280 hunters that nobody wanted this.

5 unlike the Board of Commissioners, I
6 understood how the Saturday opener would affect
7 thousands of small businesses in the northern half
8 of our state. I contacted sporting goods stores
9 that sold hunting licenses and related goods.
10 Basically I was looking for a barometer that would
11 be credible to show the position the hunters really
12 were in because it was ignored from the board
13 completely.

14 Legislators, I sent the results of the
15 small but telling survey to your offices and to the
16 PGC commissioners. Several of these business
17 owners also claimed neighboring businesses that
18 hunters annually patronize experience the same
19 situation. And they also identified strong
20 opposition from hunters for changing the opener and
21 from the business owners, comments like "I've never
22 heard so much anger over a new change" and "what a
23 mess they made of this" came from these business
24 owners.

25 This survey included Pennsylvania's

1 largest private-owned gun sales store, Grice's Gun
2 Shop, down to small stores like Paul's Trading Post
3 in Kane, Pennsylvania. Collective losses from
4 these ten sample businesses that weekend exceeded
5 \$360,000. The largest one there was obviously
6 Grice's Gun Shop. He was around \$206,000, but the
7 other nine businesses made up quite a bit
8 themselves at \$30,000, \$35,000, \$40,000 a clip of
9 money they lost that weekend in sales because it
10 just dried up, completely blindsided them.

11 I tried to encompass a broad scope of
12 business sizes in the survey. I also included to
13 you the letter from Senator Scott Hutchinson to the
14 Game Commission identifying the same extreme sales
15 losses in his district.

16 "These small businesses already have a
17 tough time competing and, "I'm quoting him, "I'm
18 afraid that this could be the straw that breaks the
19 camel's back and they may be forced to shut their
20 doors."

21 In addition, I know of two local fire
22 departments whose large weekend fundraising raffles
23 were hit hard by the change-up of the opening day.
24 And I implore you to read the senator's letter
25 regarding his district.

1 The economic impact of changing the deer
2 opener was crystal clear to those of us
3 understanding hunter patronage of these business
4 throughout this weekend. The Game Commission Board
5 of Commissioners did no research, nor even
6 mentioned this critical aspect in their
7 decisionmaking. To this day, there's no concern or
8 recognition of this circumstance. In fact, they
9 are proposing putting a Sunday following the
10 Saturday which will further hurt these businesses
11 impacted from hunter patronage.

12 Recently in an article in the York
13 Dispatch, President Charlie Fox, who is now board
14 president, was interviewed, and he commented
15 that -- his testimony was that he had ten
16 businesses that he had correspondence that, which
17 again, these businesses were the most profitable
18 they had that weekend. My testimony from these ten
19 businesses, and he referred to these businesses
20 that I gave information, were "claims." And,
21 Legislators, once again, the PDC dismissing letters
22 from business owners offering to open up their
23 books to substantiate their losses are not claims;
24 they're facts. And this kind of bothered me. You
25 know, I made the effort to pull this all in, and it

1 just got dismissed as claims and it was not that.
2 These businesses will open their books to show you
3 the impact from that weekend.

4 May I appeal to your common sense
5 reasoning? Would guiding over a half million
6 hunters away from their families and into the woods
7 on this Saturday, Small Business Saturday
8 nonetheless, stimulate business patronage or reduce
9 it? Of course, maybe these hunters were shopping
10 from their cellphones. These days, you never know.
11 You can see the contemptuous dismissal toward me
12 and the facts presented surrounding this issue.
13 This overlooked economic oversight by the agency
14 seems to have struck a nerve that they had never
15 contemplated what this was going to do.

16 Now, to explain this, this is different
17 depending what part of the state you're in, and I
18 can try to identify that. The windfall of sales
19 from hunter impulse buying or otherwise that came
20 in this weekend, particularly in small rural
21 businesses, helps carry them through the winter
22 until spring and trout season when camp owners and
23 fishermen come out of hibernation. Camp and
24 seasonal home communities are mostly ghost towns in
25 this period, but business operating costs remain

1 alive and this lost revenue is gone and does not
2 come back.

3 why all this emphasis to bring in some
4 of the college student license sales and
5 inconvenience countless Pennsylvania hunters now
6 needing to juggle family member Thanksgiving-visit
7 scenarios and killing needed time for travel,
8 preparation, and tradition for approximately
9 200,000 camp hunters and hunters statewide for that
10 matter? This attempt to somehow create time by
11 putting in the Saturday did completely the
12 opposite. The traditions and -- you know, people
13 procrastinate and leave things to the last minute,
14 and hunters are no different. If you've ever tried
15 to get on the shooting range on that weekend, you
16 can't do it.

17 So hunters at this point realized right
18 after Thanksgiving they had Friday and that was it
19 and they had to be in the woods the next morning.
20 The main word I heard a lot of guys that were even
21 on the fence about this, they didn't like it after
22 the fact because it became too rushed. Everything
23 just got too hectic.

24 The Saturday opener inflicted millions
25 of dollars of losses in rural areas to businesses

1 already stretched thin. The Saturday opener
2 opposition stands strong statewide, but I cannot
3 stress strongly enough just the stimulus that our
4 camp culture brings year round to a large portion
5 of the state's rural economy through taxes,
6 utilities, maintenance in and around these small
7 rural towns. The Saturday opener will be the last
8 nail in the coffin to some businesses and damaging
9 to our still popular Pennsylvania camp tradition.

10 If you feel the PDC has no
11 responsibility in its decisionmaking towards the
12 state's economy, license sales reflected minimal
13 interests from the Saturday opener which I want to
14 address.

15 A recent Game Commission press release
16 was titled "License Sales Up After Deer Opener."
17 This claim is misleading at best, intentionally
18 misleading at worst. Let me explain.

19 Annual license sales are a fluctuating
20 entity. Why a hunter chooses to buy a license and
21 decides to lapse is mostly unpredictable and
22 influenced by many factors annually. Please keep
23 this mercurial license sale aspect in mind as I
24 move forward.

25 If you would take the packet stapled

1 together marked No. 3 in the top right corner,
2 you'll see a bar graph there that was presented by
3 Dr. Jagnow at the Game Commission meeting in
4 January. If you see the parts that I have marked,
5 you'll see a cyclic circumstance from '83 to '85, a
6 drop in three years and in '86 an uptake of .31.
7 Nearly identically ten years later, '93 to '95, a
8 drop in license sales and in '96 an uptake of .48
9 percent. Nearly 10, 11 years later, the same
10 thing: '05 and '07, three years of consecutive
11 significant drop of license sales. Then it went
12 back up, .56 percent. And if you look at today, we
13 have '16 to '18 and they were up in 2019 .4
14 percent. What this is trying to make clear is,
15 license sales can correct themselves for no
16 apparent reason at all. So keep that in mind as I
17 move forward with my testimony.

18 when multiple variables are introduced
19 in hunting seasons, it becomes difficult, if not
20 impossible, to claim any single variable's impact
21 or the degree of impact on license sales. Also,
22 from 2008 to '18, these sales increased five of the
23 11 years 45 percent of the time.

24 Now, if you'll notice, 3-A is one of the
25 other PowerPoint slides, and if you notice, it was

1 reported that 13 times in 36 years. You know,
2 stretching it out there, it looked like 36.1
3 percent. But more poignantly, if you pull that
4 down to the last 11 years, that increases to 45.4
5 percent. So it seems to me, why would you not have
6 picked the most current stage of the license sales?
7 It shows in the last 11 years almost half the time
8 they have changed. They went up. So again, it
9 shows that mercurial up-and-down aspect of license
10 sales that's relatively unpredictable.

11 This past year we saw a lot of changes
12 in seasons, a tremendous amount of changes. Late
13 archery and flintlock deer seasons were extended by
14 more than a week; we created a new October
15 muzzleloader seven-day bear season that included
16 two Saturdays; a new 12-day statewide archery bear
17 season; a new three-day special firearm season,
18 including one Saturday; a new September elk archery
19 season; a new January elk season.

20 The point being made here is, there were
21 several factors introduced at the same time as the
22 Saturday opener. So basically there was a huge
23 interest in results from some of these changes,
24 none of which were influenced likely by the
25 Saturday opener.

1 Three new bear seasons were very popular
2 and a huge success and yielded the largest bear
3 harvest in Pennsylvania history. When you combine
4 that aspect with all the season changes likely
5 impacting license sales, combined with truthfully
6 analyzing license sales categories, there's no
7 possible way to trumpet the Saturday opener other
8 than just a minor factor. But the PGC and some
9 outdoor writers are not representing the facts
10 accurately. Remember, the mercurial or incidental
11 aspect of license sales happened in five of 11
12 years. So when you combine that with some of the
13 competition that the Saturday opener had this year,
14 which was unlike any other prior year, particularly
15 the bear season changes, you know, it's a lot of
16 interest that could have stimulated license sales.

17 Now, when we go further into this,
18 resident and nonresident bear licenses increased by
19 a whopping 27,174 licenses. How many of those
20 licenses -- now, those are not part of the general
21 license sales. Those are after the totals are sent
22 and stood up. These are permits and extra
23 licenses. So you had an interest in 27,174 more
24 hunters for bear hunting than last year. How much
25 did that stimulate license sales?

1 Resident and nonresident muzzleloader
2 sales increased by 5,182 over last year. Resident
3 and nonresident archery licenses increased by 6,022
4 last year. Adult and junior pheasant permit sales
5 are up 3,551 over last year. It would be a stretch
6 to tie any one of these categories to the Saturday
7 opener. These are actual circumstances that
8 happened from changes of seasons and opportunity.

9 So when you look at the total of that,
10 there was 58,551 attributed to general -- that were
11 not attached to general license sales but were over
12 and above the sales of these categories last year.
13 So what portion of that stimulated guys to not
14 lapse? To get an interest this year? I think the
15 one thing here that was really interesting was the
16 elk license sales. You know, they brought in 15
17 archery license tags this year. There was an
18 interest. 16,622 people applied for those
19 licenses. So again, how much of that stimulated
20 license sales prior to the season?

21 There was an effort -- now, if I go to
22 the license sales categories, it's kind of
23 interesting because the categories that were
24 targeted by the Saturday opener just didn't happen.
25 Four junior license sales categories: There's a

1 resident, nonresident, and combo in each one of
2 those. The combined totals of those dropped by
3 2,613. We stimulated almost no -- well, no license
4 sales. They dropped. The adult license category
5 also dropped by 4,292 licenses over last year. We
6 didn't stimulate adult license sales.

7 The part now that's very interesting to
8 me, if you look at the No. 5 article -- I kind of
9 jumped over one thing here, too. Let me back up
10 just a step.

11 If you look at No. 4, the paper marked
12 No. 4 at the top right corner, you see this
13 category. This is the resident senior combo
14 renewal. These are the old fellows renewing their
15 licenses under the combo license sales. If you
16 notice, this category has increased steadily for
17 the past one, two, three, four, five, ten years,
18 and they have increased between three --
19 approximately 3,000 to 4,000 licenses a year.

20 There's no reason to think that that wasn't going
21 to increase again this year. It's been almost
22 identical for over the past nine or ten years.

23 So when you take this amount of license
24 sales, 3,769, you take that off of today's, this
25 year's total, the increase in license sales this

1 year is gone. You're in the red. The .4 increase
2 now has disappeared because this category has
3 nothing to do with the Saturday opener. So the .4
4 percent increase that everybody keeps touting as we
5 did something this year, it's gone with this one
6 category.

7 Now, if you look at No. 5 presentation,
8 the two pages, there were two PowerPoints presented
9 at that January meeting: resident hunters 18 to
10 34; resident hunters 18 to 21. Now, if you notice
11 the header on those, "Saturday Opener." Again,
12 we're trying to sell something here that's just not
13 accurate. I'm going to read this entirely here.

14 "The two attached documents from PGC
15 January 2019 commissioners' meeting reveal how
16 staff summation of license sales were intentionally
17 deceptive. Titling these categories from the 18 to
18 34 year old and the 18 to 21 year old Saturday
19 opener is misleading. These categories were the
20 only categories that saw a license increase for
21 younger hunters."

22 Remember, the four youth categories were
23 all still behind from last year.

24 "The increase over 2018 was so
25 miniscule, there was this effort to spin the sales

1 from the day before and the week before the
2 Saturday opener, the shiny distracting object.
3 Choosing this dynamic presented a higher percentage
4 of increase rather than identify the paltry total
5 license sales."

6 It was such a small increase, they had
7 to find another way to make it look bigger than
8 what it actually was.

9 "Only 1,079 additional licenses were
10 sold to this group. This small increase
11 represented .13 percent or about 1/10 of the total
12 sales and only a .56 percent increase in this
13 category over 2018."

14 Now, if I cut to the chase, you look at
15 the 18- to 30-year-old sales, 1,079 licenses, that
16 was it between the 18- to 34-year-old license group
17 that was increased over last year.

18 If you notice, the 18- to 21-year-old
19 sales is 1,067. They overlap. When you subtract
20 the latter from the former, we only sold 12 more
21 licenses to the 22- to 34-year-old age group
22 statewide. Twelve hunting licenses.

23 Now, if you want to understand the
24 significance of that, one of the points the
25 commissioners made in their meeting was hunters

1 couldn't get off. Young hunters couldn't get off.
2 They don't have vacation. They don't have enough
3 time to take off. The commissioners speculated the
4 Saturday opener would benefit this 22- to
5 34-year-old age group. Young hunters with new jobs
6 and less vacation would likely have the most
7 difficulty taking off work for the Monday opener.
8 It did not happen. This result shows once again
9 the Monday opener was and is not an issue. We only
10 sold 12 licenses to that category which accurately
11 represented your younger workers.

12 If a cost/benefit analysis was done at
13 the Saturday opener proposal prior or post
14 implementation, it holds no water. The agency
15 jumped over dollars to pick up a few pennies, and
16 to influence the Sunday hunting bill, it was a good
17 "segway" I believe was the term the commissioners
18 used in their meeting.

19 Undeniably, millions of dollars of
20 revenue across large areas of our state were gone
21 or displaced. Thousands of small to medium
22 businesses need this repaired. The PGC cannot even
23 100 percent solidly identify what portion of the
24 paltry license sales increase came from the
25 Saturday opener. What that means is that 1,079

1 license sales, that increase, we don't know what
2 drove those there. The success of the bear season
3 could have been half of them. So a portion,
4 certainly, could be claimed by the Saturday opener,
5 but what portion we won't ever know.

6 So if you look at the total even of that
7 1,079, that in and of itself, to compare that to
8 the damage this did across this state to
9 traditions, to camp owners, to small business, to
10 nonprofit, the fire departments and churches that
11 used the influx of hunters into these small towns
12 to make money for their nonprofit organizations was
13 gone.

14 As a matter of fact, I received a
15 letter, and you see Senator Hutchinson identifies
16 that in his letter regarding the nonprofits. This
17 came yesterday by the Tidioute Volunteer Fire
18 Department which is up near my camp. I had talked
19 to them months ago. This came to me yesterday.

20 "The Tidioute Area Volunteer Fire
21 Department has held our largest fundraiser on
22 Saturday after Thanksgiving, a fall gun raffle.
23 This event has raised funds for operations for the
24 duration of the winter months."

25 There it is again. It's a big hit to

1 these people when they lose these fundraisers.

2 "For this fundraiser to be successful,
3 our department depends on the attendance of the
4 area hunters for this event. The recent changes
5 made to opening deer season on Saturday as opposed
6 to Monday disrupted the natural order of the
7 weekend. Typically many hunters spend Thanksgiving
8 with their family and head up to the camps on
9 Friday. Friday would consist of opening up camp,
10 getting settled, and gathering supplies. So on a
11 Saturday night in our area, these hunters would
12 unwind at the fundraiser event with drinks, food,
13 entertainment, and a chance of winning one of the
14 prizes. They went on to say here that our fall gun
15 raffle attendance was less than half of what it has
16 been in previous years.

17 So the aspect of this isn't only the
18 small businesses, the medium businesses, it's the
19 nonprofits, our first responders, churches, fire
20 halls. They all took advantage of that influx.

21 So when we look at this thing now, most
22 schools still give off to accommodate for the first
23 day of deer season. Can we remember being young,
24 you know, and how much to us -- that we can reverse
25 this shortsighted thing before we lose that Monday

1 off for the kids, too. You know, that was the
2 perception from people outside of our hunting
3 community that hunting was still important. So we
4 lost that, too, if this doesn't get reversed.

5 But ultimately what I would like to
6 suggest as a compromise is that we go back to the
7 Monday opener, correct all the problems that the
8 Saturday opener just created, put the Sunday after
9 this first traditional Saturday, the week after the
10 Monday opener, so you can hunt the 13 days through.
11 This corrects everything basically. And if anybody
12 thinks that this has changed, it hasn't, because
13 some of the recent -- here are some recent
14 petitions just ran at the Harrisburg show that the
15 guys put out at our Unified booth. And they're
16 running -- well, there was an Altoona show that was
17 running 3 to 1 still opposed and the Harrisburg
18 show was running 56 opposed to 13 yes. So 4 to 1
19 on these petitions to this day hunters are still
20 opposed to the change to Saturday.

21 Thank you.

22 MR. ECKLER: Thank you for your
23 testimony. I want to take a second here to let
24 Representative Wentling introduce himself.

25 MR. WENTLING: My name is

1 Parke Wentling. I'm the state representative in
2 the 17th Legislative District which includes parts
3 of Erie, Crawford, Mercer, and Lawrence Counties.
4 So thanks for having me.

5 MR. SANTUCCI: Thank you for coming.

6 MR. ECKLER: Great. And we're going to
7 hold questions until the end, so don't go too far.

8 MR. SANTUCCI: Sure.

9 MR. ECKLER: At this time I would like
10 to welcome up Mr. Daub, the executive director of
11 the Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen and
12 Conservationists.

13 Mr. Daub, whenever you're ready.

14 MR. DAUB: All right, thank you. I
15 don't usually move this slow. I injured my back a
16 couple of days ago.

17 Chairman Gillespie, Representative
18 Eckler, Chairman Kortz, and members of the
19 committee, I am Harold Daub, Executive Director of
20 the Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen and
21 Conservationists, the voice of Pennsylvania's
22 conservationists since 1932. Thank you for the
23 opportunity to share our thoughts related to
24 conservation, wildlife management, our outdoor
25 heritage, and specifically the Saturday opening day

1 of rifle deer season.

2 The PFSC appreciates any effort that
3 provides additional opportunities for
4 Pennsylvania's hunters-conservationists. One of
5 these recent efforts was the move to change the
6 long-time Monday opener to a Saturday opener for
7 the rifle deer season. This move has been
8 controversial and, hence, why we are here today.

9 Change is often hard and not often
10 easily accepted by Pennsylvanians who cherish our
11 traditions. However, just because we may not be
12 happy with the change, it doesn't mean the change
13 isn't necessary. Like Bud, I have a bit of a
14 quandary here when I surveyed our membership.

15 When the proposal for a Saturday opener
16 was first introduced last year, 61 percent of our
17 clubs who responded to our survey opposed the
18 change. However, 70 percent of our individual
19 members who responded did support the change. When
20 asked why some opposed the change, the general
21 response typically was, they referenced tradition.

22 We are now again polling our members on
23 their opinions following the implementation of the
24 Saturday opener, the proposal to keep the Saturday
25 opener, and the additional opportunity of adding

1 the coinciding Sunday. So far, the feedback has
2 been mostly positive, and many Pennsylvania hunters
3 are looking forward to having a full weekend of
4 deer hunting opportunity in the upcoming season.
5 Our members have until the March 15, 2020 spring
6 conference to weigh in with their opinions. At
7 that time, all the votes will be tabulated and
8 shared with our board of directors and delegates,
9 and then I will be sharing our position with the
10 Pennsylvania Board of Commissioners at the April 6
11 meeting.

12 We acknowledge the Saturday opener of
13 the 2019-2020 rifle deer season has been
14 controversial, and it did present challenges to
15 some of our members who traveled to camp. But
16 we've also heard stories from members who were
17 excited to be able to hunt with their school- and
18 college-aged kids and some who, because of work
19 priorities, were ecstatic to be able to hunt on
20 opening day for the first time in many years. The
21 Saturday opener gave them an extra day to hunt.
22 The Saturday opener was especially important for
23 those who only had the weekend to hunt.

24 The Governor's Youth Council for
25 Hunting, Fishing and Conservation provided a

1 statement -- and it's included in my package that
2 hopefully all of you have received -- on the
3 Saturday opener to the PGC when they spoke on
4 January 25th at the Game Commission meeting. I
5 thought these paragraphs warranted highlighting.

6 "Most postsecondary institutions end the
7 Thanksgiving break on the following Monday, further
8 eliminating opportunities for college kids to go
9 hunting. Remember, too, that for students who
10 travel great distances to return to college,
11 Saturday is likely the only full day for hunting
12 available on the one weekend that they have off.

13 "In 1963, the Game Commission moved the
14 opener from December 3rd to the Monday after
15 Thanksgiving. Traditionalists, though ruffled at
16 first, quickly evolved to accommodate this
17 advantageous change. Old traditions seamlessly
18 meld into new ones with time. Starting the season
19 on Saturday will allow people of all ages,
20 occupations and backgrounds to participate in
21 making timeless hunting memories."

22 That testimony was given by
23 Ms. Emma Olney, who is the president of the
24 Governor's Youth Council for Hunting, Fishing and
25 Conservation.

1 while representing PFSC at the NRA Great
2 American Outdoor Show earlier this month, I
3 performed a very unscientific one-day ad hoc poll
4 regarding the Saturday rifle opener. I asked
5 attendees passing by my booth if they were
6 Pennsylvania deer hunters. If the answer was yes,
7 I asked Saturday opener: yes, no or undecided? I
8 had 108 people that I surveyed: 75 people
9 supported the Saturday opener, 22 people opposed,
10 and 11 responded as undecided.

11 I've also conducted an all-access
12 Facebook poll. We had more than a thousand
13 respondents, and 65 percent of those were in
14 support of the Saturday opener.

15 Regardless of the final results of these
16 polls and the official position that we will
17 ultimately take, the Federation is adamant that the
18 opening day and length of all seasons are wildlife
19 management regulatory issues dealing with seasons
20 and bag limits. Thus, they are decisions that we
21 believe are and should remain under the regulatory
22 authority of the subject matter experts, the
23 Pennsylvania Game Commission. We will oppose any
24 legislative attempts to mandate wildlife management
25 decisions via legislation. And I did a recent poll

1 about that question, and with over 700 respondents,
2 92 percent indicated they did not want a
3 legislative answer to this issue. They would
4 rather have it be decided by the Game Commission.

5 The Pennsylvania Game Commission is
6 entrusted with the management of the state's nearly
7 500 species of wildlife. This includes the 67
8 species that we hunt. The ability to set seasons
9 and bag limits is a crucial part of the management
10 process. The Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen
11 and Conservationists supports the science based and
12 led resource first model and the process of the
13 Pennsylvania Game Commission. Any other system or
14 interference threatens the management of
15 Pennsylvania's wild birds, wild mammals, and their
16 habitats for current and future generations.

17 Recent changes in longstanding
18 management practices, while sometimes hard to
19 accept at first, allow for maximum opportunity for
20 Pennsylvania hunters and have led to an increase in
21 license sales this year. Increases in license
22 sales mean more overall Pittman-Robertson funding
23 coming to Pennsylvania. It also means more general
24 revenue from licenses. Both sources translate into
25 more funds for the Commission to use for habitat

1 and species projects and R3 -- recruiting,
2 retention and reactivation -- initiatives across
3 the state.

4 The Commission's regulatory authority,
5 while we may not always agree with every decision
6 the Commission makes, it is our opinion that the
7 current Board of Commissioners does a great job
8 overall of managing Pennsylvania's wildlife using a
9 science-based resource-first decisionmaking
10 process.

11 A prime example took place during the
12 recent January public comment session where an
13 individual spoke about the history of raccoon
14 hunting season. He expressed his concern that
15 years ago the raccoon season started October 1st.
16 And then as raccoon pelts became more valuable,
17 more people were trapping, more people were hunting
18 them, the Game Commission took action to reduce
19 that season, to shrink the season. And he asked
20 the question, now that not many people are
21 trapping, not many people are hunting raccoons, how
22 come that season didn't expand? It was very
23 interesting to me to hear that, and then later on
24 in the meeting, one of the commissioners brought
25 that up and said, "I think that was something we

1 ought to have the staff look at." And that was a
2 good example to how they are hearing the public and
3 making decisions, but they are considering the
4 resource first.

5 As older hunters age out of the license-
6 buying system, the Commission must be able to
7 utilize new ideas to keep the next generation of
8 hunters engaged. The Federation's board of
9 directors understand that some of these changes may
10 not always make everyone happy and may sometimes
11 shake things up and cause us to try new traditions.
12 We understand there will be times it won't always
13 be about what's best for me but, instead, what's
14 best for the resource and the overall best interest
15 for the continuation of our outdoor heritage.

16 Based on current feedback and increase
17 in license sales, specifically the sales referenced
18 on the day before the opener, we believe this may
19 be one of those times, I believe this may be one of
20 those times.

21 I thank you again for this opportunity.
22 I'm honored to speak on behalf of the Federation
23 and as a conservation community united behind the
24 commitment to provide science based and led
25 wildlife management for the benefit of all

1 Pennsylvania wildlife citizens and visitors.

2 I thank you for your time to have me out
3 here, Bud.

4 Thank you.

5 MR. ECKLER: Thank you, Mr. Daub. And
6 again, we're going to save questions for the end
7 here, so like I said before, don't go too far.

8 At this time I'd like to introduce
9 Bryan Burhans, the Executive Director of the
10 Pennsylvania Game Commission.

11 Come on up.

12 MR. BURHANS: Chairman Kortz, Committee
13 Members, my name is Bryan Burhans, Executive
14 Director for the Pennsylvania Game Commission. I
15 would like to invite to provide our testimony -- we
16 are managed or governed by an eight-member board of
17 directors who set policy for the agency -- so I'd
18 like to introduce Commissioner Denny Fredericks who
19 will provide our testimony.

20 MR. FREDERICKS: Thank you, Bryan.

21 Good afternoon, Chairman Gillespie, or
22 thank you, Chairman Gillespie -- I'm sorry he
23 couldn't be here -- Chairman Kortz, members of the
24 House Game & Fisheries Committee. My name is
25 Dennis Fredericks, and I am the commissioner for

1 District 2 which encompasses Allegheny, Armstrong,
2 Beaver, Fayette, Greene, Indiana, Washington, and
3 Westmoreland Counties. On behalf of the entire
4 Board of Commissioners and the agency, I want to
5 thank you for the opportunity to come before you to
6 talk about last year's decision to move the opening
7 day of the rifle deer season to Saturday.

8 It is important to remember that the
9 Pennsylvania Game Commission exists to protect 480
10 species of wild birds and wild mammals in their
11 habitats for current and future generations. The
12 last part is especially important and one aspect
13 that I believe yet overlooked quite often. As your
14 state wildlife conservation agency, we are tasked
15 with managing for the present and the future.
16 Additionally, it is important to note that by law
17 we are required to manage all of those species for
18 everyone, hunters and nonhunters alike.

19 As you know, the Pennsylvania Game
20 Commission receives no general fund tax dollars.
21 We rely on three major sources of funding: natural
22 resource management (oil, gas, coal, timber); and
23 Pittman-Robertson federal excise tax revenue from
24 sporting goods; and hunting and trapping license
25 sales.

1 The Pittman-Robertson funds are
2 intricately tied to license sales. Essentially,
3 the more licenses we sell, the more federal funds
4 we receive and are able to draw down and put toward
5 any number of initiatives that benefit wildlife and
6 hunting here in Pennsylvania.

7 The license year begins July 1st and it
8 runs through June 30th. While I cannot tell you
9 what the final license sales numbers will be on
10 June 30th, I can tell you what they look like
11 through January 31st. Our year-to-date sales of
12 licenses have increased over the last year. This
13 is significant. As of January 31st, general
14 license sales have increased by 3,618 over last
15 year to date.

16 On the surface, 3618 additional hunters
17 may not seem significant, but we can look at some
18 other states for comparison. Through December
19 31st, New York was down 2 percent. Michigan was
20 down 3 percent. Ohio who was down 8 percent. So
21 not only did we see an increase, we did so at a
22 time when other big hunting states were losing
23 license buyers.

24 Nationally, hunting license sales have
25 been on a decline for decades. In Pennsylvania,

1 hunting license sales peaked in the very early '80s
2 and have generally been declining since. There
3 have been a few small increases along the way, but
4 for the most part they are declining. Countless
5 surveys and research projects have been done, not
6 only in Pennsylvania but nationally, to determine
7 the cause of this decline. Through all this work,
8 overwhelmingly the No. 1 reason that people do not
9 purchase a license is lack of time.

10 The logical remedy for this would be to
11 create additional opportunities for hunters and
12 trappers. However, it is important to balance the
13 needs of the resource with hunting opportunities.
14 With that in mind, finding additional opportunities
15 for hunters to take afield is very difficult and
16 limited. We have to be strategic about those
17 additional opportunities. Just randomly throwing
18 extra days on the end of the season or adding some
19 obscure extra season are not likely to work. We
20 have to take advantage of what we know regarding
21 hunter tendencies, buying behaviors, and make the
22 best decision we can with that information.

23 For example, we know that the average
24 age of a deer hunter in Pennsylvania is 54 years
25 old. That's troubling. In just a few years, those

1 hunters are going to age out of the yearly license
2 buyer and into the lifetime license class of which,
3 of course, they don't pay. We have to find a way
4 to get and keep the younger generation involved.

5 we know that we lose a considerable
6 number of license buyers from the age of 18 to 30.
7 It makes sense. Kids hunt with parents
8 consistently through the time they graduate from
9 high school. At that point they are off to
10 college, trade schools, military, workforce, you
11 name it. They are starting their lives as adults:
12 first jobs, starting families, buying houses.
13 Their time is exceptionally limited. They are
14 dealing with being lowest on the seniority list for
15 time off, if they even have vacation days to take.
16 They are dealing with getting back to school for
17 class and finals. They don't want to have to make
18 that difficult decision. In a lot of cases it's
19 made for them. Randomly throwing another week of
20 rifle deer season isn't going to help those folks.

21 we know that we are losing hunters to
22 other states, and it's not because they have better
23 hunting. Make no mistake, Pennsylvania has world-
24 class hunting, whether you are pursuing deer, bear,
25 turkey, elk, or a myriad of other species. We know

1 we're losing them because of opportunities to hunt
2 based on, again, time. Time available. We have
3 heard from PA residents that are going to New York
4 and Ohio because they are able to hunt the whole
5 weekend. Likewise, we hear from hunters in other
6 states that we'd love to come hunt Pennsylvania if
7 they were able to hunt the entire weekend. We also
8 know that we have a very limited number of huntable
9 days that will help fill this void.

10 we've heard the point made regarding the
11 survey that was done a couple of years ago which
12 showed that hunters preferred the opening day to be
13 on Monday. The issue with the survey was in the
14 questioning. It was like asking whether you
15 preferred steak or lobster. I may prefer lobster,
16 but I also like steak.

17 I can tell you that the response that we
18 have seen in regard to the Saturday opener has been
19 overwhelmingly positive. We have heard countless
20 stories of how college students were able to hunt
21 with their families for the first time in years,
22 reliving those traditions of years past, how former
23 Pennsylvania residents were able to come back and
24 hunt in the same area they did years ago.

25 we've heard about the parents with young

1 families that had the opportunity to not only hunt
2 with their children but have precious additional
3 time with them. Yes, we have heard some traditions
4 being impacted, but we have also heard the
5 incredible stories of new traditions that have been
6 started.

7 I'm sure that at some point you have
8 heard someone say that the Game Commission just
9 wants to get rid of hunters altogether, or the
10 other conspiracy theory you may hear is that we
11 just want to eradicate deer. I am telling you that
12 cannot be further from the truth. The Pennsylvania
13 Game Commission is filled with passionate lifelong
14 hunters who continue to work in the best interest
15 of all citizens of this great Commonwealth.

16 The truth of the matter is that the
17 future of conservation in Pennsylvania relies on
18 hunters and trappers continuing to participate. We
19 have to be open to idea that will buck the trend of
20 declining license sales. Time will tell if this
21 was the right move, but in a vacuum it appears that
22 moving to a Saturday opener has moved the needle in
23 a positive direction with respect to hunter
24 participation, and that is a godsend for
25 conservation in general.

1 Thank you again for the opportunity to
2 come here today. I would be happy to take any
3 questions that you may have.

4 MR. ECKLER: Thank you, Mr. Fredericks.

5 At this time we're going to take
6 questions. So those folks that spoke before, stand
7 by. First I'm going to go to Representative
8 Maloney.

9 MR. MALONEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
10 How do you like that?

11 (Laughter.)

12 MR. ECKLER: Not bad for a freshman.

13 MR. MALONEY: I'm not so sure that's a
14 super honor today.

15 But thank you, Gentlemen, for being
16 here. I do have a series of questions that no
17 doubt will have to be answered by individuals.

18 But, Mr. Fredericks, since you're
19 sitting there, you know, I have to tell you, I'm
20 hearing a plethora of different numbers today and,
21 frankly, probably more research on license sales
22 from the first testifier than I've ever heard.

23 They're your numbers though; right? He
24 got them from the Game Commission; right?

25 Bryan is shaking his head.

1 MR. BURHANS: I assume he did.

2 MR. MALONEY: So there's a little bit of
3 a discrepancy here. Take a couple of digits here
4 or there maybe, but I think what troubles me in a
5 general sense is, you do, as others have done in
6 the past, use the responsibility of the Game
7 Commission to the 480 species. But I will also
8 remind you, in Title 34, quite frankly this room is
9 also filled, no doubt, with sportsmen which is what
10 the Commission is in priority to serve. And, quite
11 frankly, it's the sportsmen who purchase the
12 licenses.

13 So we know you have a duty, as many of
14 us enjoy many nongame animals also, but I would
15 also like to remind you that that is to be your
16 No. 1 priority, even as you stated with the money.

17 So having said that, going back some
18 years, since I do happen to have quite a bit of
19 history as a hunter and sportsman, trapper and
20 whatnot, there has always been a question about the
21 product and what is being managed and how it's
22 being managed. I often bring up our state bird,
23 and many times it's blamed on West Nile virus.
24 And, quite frankly, every national organization
25 that I have rubbed shoulders with have said it's

1 about habitat.

2 And so for me, when we're just here
3 today mostly on the Saturday opener, you did
4 reference things like steak and lobster, which I'm
5 not so sure that applies. But nevertheless, that's
6 your analogy and that's okay. I'm going to share
7 -- or I'll ask you this question. Do you believe
8 that, when you say it was overwhelmingly positive,
9 the upheaval that was created even within the ranks
10 of the commissioners was positive?

11 MR. FREDERICKS: Are you asking me was
12 the juice worth the squeeze?

13 MR. MALONEY: No. I'm asking you what I
14 just asked you. I'm asking you was that positive
15 according to your testimony?

16 MR. FREDERICKS: I mean I'm not sure.

17 MR. MALONEY: About the commissioner
18 that resigned over this subject we're talking about
19 today.

20 MR. FREDERICKS: I feel very comfortable
21 in telling you -- I've been at this game a long
22 time, as you have. I served as commissioner under
23 Governor Ridge in '91. I'm serving my second term.
24 I've seen a lot of controversial issues come and
25 go. Among our current board, I can look you dead

1 in the eye and tell you that that was a very hard
2 courageous decision for each one of them to make.
3 And honestly, some of those commissioners didn't
4 know what their vote was going to be until the very
5 last second.

6 As far as the upheaval you described,
7 the only upheaval there was, was you had seven
8 board members of which the Saturday opener wasn't
9 even on their radar at all, including me, and then
10 you had one commissioner that thought that that
11 might be a good idea, and he brought it up in the
12 name of the children because he's a lifelong hunter
13 education instructor. That's the reason he brought
14 it up.

15 when he started to see the negativism
16 coming in, which we all did, but frankly Chairman
17 Gillespie and Chairman Kortz called us in and we
18 told them the truth. We did our due diligence, and
19 we all went home to our respective districts and I
20 talked to sportsmen's clubs and conservation
21 leagues and high school students, college students.

22 I have a camp in Potter County. I
23 traveled all over Potter County. Did not identify
24 myself. I did not tell them who I was. I talked
25 to business owners, motel owners, hunters in the

1 woods. And I have to say, Representative Maloney,
2 that the vast majority of comment that I got back
3 was apathy. Most of the comment was apathetic. It
4 doesn't matter to me. I'm a hunter. Open deer
5 season on a Wednesday. I'll find a way to get
6 there. I understand that you need to do this for
7 the young people, and I don't like it. I don't
8 like it.

9 But I want to be clear that there was no
10 disruption or upheaval among the board other than
11 Commissioner Daley leaving under these conditions.

12 MR. MALONEY: Well, that's upheaval. I
13 mean he is the individual that you refer to as the
14 man who proposed this.

15 MR. FREDERICKS: Yes.

16 MR. MALONEY: And after he saw what the
17 outcry was, he was so strongly against it that when
18 that vote took place, he couldn't bear it and left.

19 MR. FREDERICKS: Obviously, I mean, that
20 would be the reason he would leave.

21 MR. MALONEY: Yeah. So I think I had to
22 explain that because I'm not so sure that maybe we
23 have the same definition for upheaval. And since
24 you've served several times -- and thank you for
25 that -- you would no doubt remember that there are

1 commissioners who bucked the board on just mere
2 management.

3 MR. FREDERICKS: Sure.

4 MR. MALONEY: And so there have been
5 some things that have taken place with respect to
6 what you would do and the decisions that you would
7 make.

8 I would also tell you that even your
9 own -- I think what bothers me is, when we hear
10 these numbers, and even twice, was the fact that
11 hunters in their numbers didn't want this; 61
12 percent, 81 percent, whatever that was. And I know
13 a commissioner back home in a private meeting used
14 the 65 figure. I said, sir, in our world that's a
15 landslide even if you don't use the 81 percent, and
16 he said, well, I would agree.

17 And so I guess just steering this to
18 you, I guess really my question really would be in
19 my mind about how we make those decisions and maybe
20 we find out that they shouldn't have been. And
21 even to say to have a full weekend, I think the
22 testifier before brought out the point that you
23 could have that full weekend very easily with a
24 Sunday the very following weekend. So it's an
25 option. I mean this is something that you could

1 change.

2 MR. FREDERICKS: Sure.

3 MR. MALONEY: Something that you could
4 go forward.

5 And not to leave out the others with
6 respect to this, but I had a text message sent to
7 me from somebody that you all know, and I know you
8 all know him, and I would just like to tell you
9 that this individual was so taken aback by the
10 decision that what he texted me was, "I now just
11 lost my opportunity to hunt the opening day. It's
12 Thanksgiving weekend." Quote, "People are going to
13 get divorced over this." That's how serious this
14 individual took this. And I assure you probably
15 everybody in this room knows who that is. And I
16 would never identify somebody, but that's a text
17 message that came to me almost immediately after
18 you folks made the vote. So it's a serious matter.

19 MR. FREDERICKS: Pennsylvanians are
20 serious hunters.

21 MR. MALONEY: Correct. And also, some
22 of us serve on the tourism committee, and tourism
23 is the second biggest industry in Pennsylvania,
24 which a lot of people don't understand that, and
25 the tourism piece to this is also intertwined with

1 tradition.

2 So just from an objective point of view
3 looking back -- and I've often told many people
4 that I like to use my hunting and background as
5 experience -- but I try to separate myself as a
6 legislator as to the voice of the people, in which
7 I will say rather sharply again to Mr. Daub, if you
8 think taking the voice of the legislature, which is
9 the people, out of this Democratic process, then
10 you might as well go to a communist country.

11 We. Are. The. Voice. It insults me,
12 it insults the sportsmen, and it insults everybody
13 who goes to their representative about an issue or
14 a board that is senate confirmed. I don't know
15 what you don't understand about that. You must go
16 to the senate to be confirmed like that gentleman
17 is. That's the legislature. It's insulting to
18 continuously hear that we should not be in this
19 process.

20 MR. FREDERICKS: May I add something?

21 MR. MALONEY: Sure.

22 MR. FREDERICKS: You mentioned tourism,
23 and I know that Representative Cook is very
24 interested in Pennsylvania tourism. You know, the
25 increase in license sales that we have, although

1 they are very preliminary and we're not to the end
2 of the year yet, a substantial portion of those
3 license increases were nonresidents.

4 MR. MALONEY: I saw that.

5 MR. FREDERICKS: And for now it looks
6 like people came home for Thanksgiving and were
7 able to purchase a license and hunt on Saturday.

8 MR. MALONEY: I saw that, and I don't
9 even want to try to dissect that. I really don't.

10 MR. FREDERICKS: I'm not prepared
11 either.

12 MR. MALONEY: But my defense in
13 Pennsylvania in that respect would be, Pennsylvania
14 comes first. And I've always felt that a
15 Pennsylvania resident should come first no matter
16 what the issue is. I don't care if it's a tag or
17 what it is. To me, Pennsylvania sportsmen come
18 first.

19 MR. FREDERICKS: I respect that, sir.

20 MR. MALONEY: And I think you would get
21 that overwhelmingly.

22 So that's all for now. Thank you.

23 MR. ECKLER: Thank you, Representative
24 Maloney.

25 Representative Cook.

1 MR. COOK: We do, as representatives,
2 serve us, the people. Just a straw poll in the
3 crowd. Pro Saturday.

4 (Hands raised.)

5 MR. COOK: Move it back to Monday.

6 (Hands raised.)

7 MR. COOK: Thank you.

8 Again, you know, the sportsmen here are
9 in a very, very, very concentrated sportsmen area.
10 I mean what's the position going forward? I mean
11 do we have a position from the commission?

12 MR. FREDERICKS: Yeah. Our position is,
13 as we promised to Chairman Gillespie and Chairman
14 Kortz, we're in the middle of a comment period for
15 seasons and bag limits for 2020. So we'll continue
16 to take public comment. I have to turn my phone
17 off because it's burning up on my side all day. I
18 mean my e-mails are off the chart, and we're
19 hearing from both sides and all entities.

20 So, you know, we are in the middle of a
21 comment period. We promised both chairmen that we
22 would, you know, review the results and make plans
23 for next year, and I would encourage you all as
24 representatives to please have your constituents
25 let us know how they feel, and I would encourage

1 you as representatives to let us know. Let the
2 agency know. Let Josh Zimmerman, our legislative
3 liaison, let us know.

4 MR. COOK: Randy, would you like to --

5 MR. SANTUCCI: well, we did this last
6 spring. You know, the sportsmen spoke out in
7 surveys and contacts to the agency. But addressing
8 something, you know, when we talk about -- and I
9 know Commissioner Fredericks from serving on the
10 council with him -- seven commissioners were
11 blind-sided he mentioned.

12 MR. ECKLER: Can you come up to the mic,
13 please?

14 MR. SANTUCCI: Thank you.

15 MR. ECKLER: Mr. Daub, why don't you
16 pull a couple of seats up here, too, if you don't
17 mind.

18 MR. SANTUCCI: Yeah. Come on up.

19 MR. ECKLER: Mr. Daub, why don't you pop
20 up here, too, if you don't mind.

21 MR. SANTUCCI: Come on up, Harold.
22 Let's work this out.

23 You know, Denny mentioned that seven
24 commissioners were blind-sided. There's a reason
25 for that. No one ever wanted this. No one ever

1 talked about this.

2 In my 60 years in this state as a
3 resident hunter serving on the Governor's Council
4 and supporting Unified Sportsmen across the state
5 of PA, the next person that asked me that they were
6 concerned about changing the opener will be the
7 first before Jim Daley brought it up last year.
8 This was a nonissue, and that's why -- you know, I
9 understand people talk about changing a tradition,
10 but if we're going to talk about the facts here, I
11 think we have to talk about the truth.

12 when we talk about the college-aged
13 kids -- and Bryan Burhans can validate this --
14 Dr. Jagnow came back and she surveyed 18- to 25-
15 year-old hunters, student hunters, and the survey
16 came back, she gave them four days to choose from:
17 the Monday, the Saturday before, the Friday after
18 Thanksgiving, and the Saturday before that. The
19 majority from the group that she polled said they
20 still wanted the Monday opener. There we heard it
21 right from the college kids. And she went on to
22 say that in conversations with this group, they
23 said that they would miss class over a lot less
24 reasons than the opening day of deer season. That
25 was the surveyed science that was presented back to

1 the board.

2 So we keep running circles around what
3 is and what isn't. We talked about the time
4 factor. I heard that mentioned. Again, Dr. Jagnow
5 did a 19-point survey of reasons why hunters
6 lapsed. This is what put Jim Daley on his heels on
7 this. When those points came back, they were
8 separated by a few tenths of a point. They were so
9 evenly distributed that they were statistically
10 indistinguishable between a couple of the items.
11 And she finished her presentation saying that
12 hunters lapsed for a multitude of reasons. Time
13 was certainly not a major factor.

14 So lapsing hunters and trying to create
15 this fictitious time, we put the Saturday in with
16 an attempt to create some time. And I heard it
17 also testified about creating this time for younger
18 professionals and people just coming out of school
19 and starting jobs don't have vacation. You sold 12
20 licenses this year in the 22- to 34-year-old age
21 group. Now, that might change by the end of the
22 year, but up until my data until the end of
23 December that I have from the agency, 12 licenses.
24 So how much impact did this have? So how much
25 concern was there from these (quote/unquote)

1 "younger individuals" that couldn't get off to go
2 Monday? You think there would have been a rush of
3 license sales because now gee, I can go Saturday.
4 Didn't happen. Didn't happen.

5 MR. MALONEY: So are you saying priority
6 is probably what's the issue?

7 MR. SANTUCCI: Tradition, priority, the
8 time factor within this weekend. And I don't
9 begrudge the agency for trying something. I get
10 that. And Jim Daley, God bless him, he floated
11 something out there that blew up in his face, and I
12 give him a lot of credit. To this day, he is
13 working now to put this Monday opener back. That's
14 a professional opinion. He's a good man.

15 But what we saw happen here, when you
16 come back with license sales today that they're up,
17 I think I pointed out prior that that one category
18 of a senior combo, if you yank that out, which had
19 nothing to do with Saturday, the license sales are
20 in the red. So we didn't really go up.

21 You see the bar chart I showed you. The
22 three years on cyclic, it almost looks like you
23 made it up. The license sales have bounced back
24 for no apparent reason after three years of
25 consecutive significant losses.

1 So the license sales, to say that we
2 brought -- the Saturday opener brought some license
3 sales in, certainly. A portion. But I think the
4 elephant in the room here is, at what cost?

5 MR. MALONEY: So are you saying, sir,
6 just so everybody can understand this, are you
7 saying that total license increases on multiple,
8 I'll say, opportunity expansions is the bigger
9 number that we're seeing compared to the subject
10 we're discussing today?

11 MR. SANTUCCI: The bigger number that we
12 saw that is trying to be claimed or -- you know,
13 like I saw the press release from the agency,
14 "License Sales Up After Saturday Opener." Now, if
15 you read that, what do you think? But the ultimate
16 truth is, you don't really know where license sales
17 come in every year, and I think that bar graph
18 shows you that. So when you take that into
19 consideration that you can't lay your finger on it,
20 certainly you can see some impact from the Saturday
21 opener. Anything you do new, you get an interest.

22 MR. MALONEY: I guess it's also hard to
23 say that you lost turkey hunters and small game on
24 that day.

25 MR. SANTUCCI: We neglected to say that.

1 That was a popular small game day for small game
2 and turkey hunters that Saturday which was taken
3 away.

4 The dynamic of this continues to grow.
5 We could slice this thing and layer this onion and
6 it will keep unfolding, but when you look at the
7 big picture here -- let's talk about license sales
8 honestly -- we didn't do much. And if you're on
9 tourism committees and so forth and if you read
10 Senator Hutchinson's letter, what it did in his
11 district and so forth, we may have brought a couple
12 thousand hunters back with this through, you know,
13 the younger guys/people. Maybe. We can't even say
14 for sure how many of them weren't interested in the
15 new bear season.

16 Because if you look at the week prior --
17 and I don't know if you know how this happens --
18 some legislators, we introduced the concurrent bear
19 and buck season the first week of the buck season
20 this year which was highly successful. Many
21 hunters sat there. Well, man, I seen bear hunting
22 opening week many times. I'm going to get my
23 license here and just go buck hunting and I might
24 luck into a bear. These type of things stimulate
25 interest, as did the elk tag, as did the early

1 muzzleloader season. Some of these stores that I
2 surveyed said they sold a lot of muzzleloaders over
3 this prior to the season. But the overall opinion
4 of everybody that I've been circulating with in all
5 of these businesses, if you read these letters that
6 I sent to all of the legislators' offices, these
7 businesses said most of the hunters that came into
8 their store did not like this. Now, who do we use
9 for a barometer? I don't know what better one.

10 So subsequently, you know, I understand
11 there was an effort here to try to do something,
12 but was this worth selling an extra thousand or two
13 licenses? I just find a hard time understanding
14 this.

15 Because you make the argument that I
16 came in and got to hunting with my college-aged son
17 or daughter this year, I can counter that with how
18 many kids went to camp this year that lost people
19 that come to their camp and their tradition was
20 killed over this because a lot of guys couldn't get
21 there. When they did get there, they were too
22 rushed. They didn't have time to partake in
23 scouting out in the woods, putting their tree
24 stands up. This is hunting. This is what it's all
25 about. It's not all about filling the tags as

1 Commissioner Konick (phonetic) said in a recent
2 broadcast. "We're doing everything we can to fill
3 hunters' tags." That's not the entirety of what
4 hunting is about in Pennsylvania.

5 I've just gone on too long. Let me say
6 one more thing. What concerns me is, I don't know
7 if the legislators are heard, but there was a
8 proposal this year to allow hunters to shoot as
9 many deer as they have tags without tagging the
10 first deer. Think about that for a minute. A
11 hunter can sit in a tree stand with three or four
12 tags, here comes some deer, he's got his Remington
13 pump rifle, he can start blasting away, killing
14 two, three, four deer, as many as six if he can get
15 lucky enough to hit them or wound them. How do you
16 propose something like that? What happened to fair
17 chase and ethics and all that?

18 So the mindset, I'm having trouble with
19 what we've done here. We've thrown tradition to
20 the wolves. We've thrown the small businesses that
21 were hurt from this, thousands of them, to the
22 wolves. We sold a few thousand licenses maybe.
23 That's the summary of the whole thing.

24 MR. FREDERICKS: May I respond?

25 MR. MALONEY: Sure, absolutely.

1 MR. FREDERICKS: With all due respect to
2 Mr. Santucci's comments, I disagree with some of
3 them and I agree with him on some of them. We have
4 absolutely not forgotten the traditions. The
5 entire staff and the entire board at the Game
6 Commission has been forced into taking the mindset
7 that traditions are to be celebrated, not
8 forgotten, and we're working on ways to do that.
9 That's No. 1.

10 No. 2, everybody keeps talking about
11 this miniscule increase in license sales of 3.7
12 percent. In the business world when you're on a
13 glide path of 3 and 4 percent loss for many, many
14 years and all of a sudden you realize a .3 percent
15 increase, that's a net 4 percent gain. So that's
16 huge.

17 MR. MALONEY: For clarity on that, what
18 is that percentage of? What number?

19 MR. FREDERICKS: I don't know, and it
20 doesn't matter at this point. That's hunters.
21 That's general hunting license. That's 3,000 more
22 hunters that bought hunting licenses this year than
23 last year, and we are second only to Texas.
24 Everybody else around us has fallen by the wayside.

25 Now, is this solution permanent? Is it

1 liquid? Can we modify it? Certainly, yes. We can
2 work with you, and we're willing to work with you.
3 You know, let's see what the numbers really are.
4 You know, this is early in the game. But there's
5 no doubt in my mind and no doubt in the staff's
6 mind that what this did was move the needle in a
7 positive direction. Can we move the needle further
8 by going to Monday, back to Monday? I don't know.
9 But we're fulfilling our promise to Representative
10 Kortz --

11 MR. MALONEY: Let me ask you a question
12 on that because you bring up a good point. So if a
13 proposal was made to go back to Monday and what
14 you're talking about with concurrent seasons and
15 you allow it to go through Saturday and Sunday into
16 the next weekend and beyond until it ends in two
17 weeks, do you think that could be a compromise to
18 the end result?

19 MR. FREDERICKS: It could be. It could
20 be. You know, again, we're in the middle of
21 comment period and, you know --

22 MR. MALONEY: I think there is something
23 very serious to consider, and I think tradition
24 isn't just hunting tradition. I think it's in
25 light of the text message that I got where people

1 are following Black Friday, they're following
2 Thanksgiving, they're following Small Business
3 Saturday, they're following all those things that
4 do keep our lives busy in tradition and family.

5 MR. FREDERICKS: Now, Representative
6 Maloney, I know you're an avid hunter. I know you
7 are. Would you miss a hunting day for Black Friday
8 shopping?

9 MR. MALONEY: I'm the exception to the
10 rule.

11 (Laughter.)

12 MR. MALONEY: That's why I take myself
13 out of it.

14 MR. FREDERICKS: I can't tell you,
15 literally hundreds, hundreds of letters, How dare
16 you.

17 MR. MALONEY: I did not -- my priority
18 was, when it was time to go, I made it happen.
19 Even with every one of my children. Okay?

20 MR. FREDERICKS: Right.

21 MR. MALONEY: So I made that happen. If
22 I had to take them out of school, they got the
23 letter. They got the note. So I made it happen.
24 I realize that some people won't be that
25 passionate. But you asked me personally, and I'm

1 telling you I made it happen.

2 MR. FREDERICKS: Right, yeah.

3 The other exception that I want to take
4 to Mr. Santucci's remarks, the Board of
5 Commissioners were not blind-sided at all. Blind-
6 sided to us on the board means that one of our
7 board members brings up an item under new business
8 without any prior discussion with staff and has a
9 second lined up to put it on the floor for
10 discussion. That's blind-sided. We were not
11 blind-sided. This followed procedure to the tee.

12 MR. MALONEY: I think you did say
13 earlier, though, that it was a surprise or -- I'm
14 not sure exactly what adjective you used when
15 Mr. Daley proposed and then --

16 MR. FREDERICKS: The adjective I used is
17 that the other seven of us, this Saturday opener
18 issue was not even on our radar.

19 MR. MALONEY: Oh, okay.

20 MR. FREDERICKS: Okay?

21 MR. MALONEY: So that was sort of the
22 blind-siding I think he was referring to.

23 MR. SANTUCCI: Yeah.

24 MR. FREDERICKS: He brought it up. He
25 got a second. And to be team players, we voted to

1 have it thrown out and run up the flagpole.

2 MR. MALONEY: Understood.

3 MR. SANTUCCI: I think my concern,
4 Denny, was when you look at the commissioners'
5 policy manual, they're remanded to take in the
6 hunter opinion, one of the constituent hunter
7 opinion. That was strongly on opposition here. It
8 was completely ignored. They're also remanded to
9 take in their staff reports. The staff reports who
10 shot down -- the commissioners had some
11 hypotheticals: time, how to bring back lapsed
12 hunters. And it was all refuted, and it was to a
13 point where -- I watched the meeting -- it was a
14 live stream meeting -- they brought in
15 Derek Stoner. He's their Hunting Outreach
16 coordinator. He's the guy they pay to know the
17 demographic of the hunters in this state. And
18 Derek came right in and he followed up and
19 supported Dr. Jagnow. We're not going to likely
20 influence younger hunters. Whatever perceived --
21 was the word he used -- whatever perceived benefit
22 you think you're going to be get from the Saturday
23 opener, you're going to be offset by camp hunters,
24 conflicting openers in other states.

25 So there was no support from staff.

1 There was no support from the hunters. If I
2 remember right, the chairman, two chairmen of this
3 very committee called that Board of Commissioners
4 back to reconsider the vote.

5 Am I right, Mr. Kortz?

6 MR. KORTZ: That's correct. I was going
7 to talk about that in a bit.

8 MR. SANTUCCI: Okay. And now we are
9 here today. This was offered. This was to be
10 revisited. That's what, I believe, the comment was
11 that was used.

12 Now, I get we have this uptake, but I
13 think I showed clearly that one category puts us in
14 the red. And the point that bothers me the most
15 is, with the success of everything that I mentioned
16 with the bear and so forth, almost 60,000 different
17 new specialty tags purchased this year because of
18 changes, how do you lay this at the feet of just
19 the one?

20 You know, if your car isn't working and
21 you change the plugs, the wires, the points, and it
22 runs right, how do you know which one fixed it?

23 So we have some data to show about
24 license sales purchased the week before, but the
25 argument can also be put into that there was a lot

1 of interest about the bear season that opened at
2 the same time. So it's a double-edged sword.

3 So I guess when you cut to the chase,
4 was what we gained worth what we lost? I really
5 think it gets to that.

6 MR. FREDERICKS: May I add one thing?

7 MR. ECKLER: Sure.

8 MR. FREDERICKS: The problem here isn't
9 the opening day of deer season and when it occurs.
10 The problem here is Thanksgiving.

11 MR. SANTUCCI: That's a good point.
12 That's part of it. That's a big part of it.

13 MR. KORTZ: You can't move that.

14 MR. SANTUCCI: Do you got that on the
15 next agenda?

16 MR. FREDERICKS: You can't move that.
17 If we move it ahead or we move it back, you know,
18 we're still going to have a different set of
19 issues.

20 MR. SANTUCCI: To a degree. To a
21 degree. I agree with Denny to a point on that.
22 But you also have to understand, having a weekend
23 ahead of the Monday -- do you know what I'm saying?
24 If you start it on a Saturday, any Saturday,
25 regardless if Thanksgiving was there, guys are

1 still coming off of work Friday, see? The time is
2 still not there to jump in, especially with 200,000
3 guys that still hunt from camps, you know.

4 So whatever Saturday you started on, you
5 lost this buffer of Saturday-Sunday preparation
6 times, opening up, warming up camp, shooting in
7 your rifle. That was the tradition and the aspect
8 that we lost. So I agree with Denny it would be
9 less complicated if we didn't have it on a
10 Thanksgiving weekend, but it would still present
11 the problems that guys would have to get off work
12 on Friday and get to camp. Otherwise, they're
13 going to have to take off work Friday. You know,
14 this weekend was the buffer for the Monday.

15 MR. ECKLER: Let's move along to
16 Representative Kulik.

17 MS. KULIK: well, a lot of my questions
18 have been answered. I have a very suburban
19 district. In fact, it's a totally suburban
20 district. But I have hundreds and hundreds of
21 sportsmen, sportswomen, and hunters in my district.
22 So this is a very important issue to them.

23 I appreciate everyone coming here and
24 giving their testimony, but I will have to add that
25 I was very impressed with the data and the numbers

1 presented by Mr. Santucci. I think a lot of those
2 hit home. I think you did your homework and
3 answered so many questions. I would have had to
4 say well, if we were up 3,618 licenses, where did
5 those come from? And I think you answered that
6 question as to where they came from, and I
7 appreciate that.

8 AS I SAID, most of my questions have
9 been answered. I will add, though, that several
10 months ago I did reach out to my constituents and
11 said on the Sunday hunting issue and the Saturday
12 change that they should contact the Game Commission
13 and we gave them the ability to do that. We sent
14 out the site for them to contact because I thought
15 that was important, and I was specifically told by
16 your staff that this is what they needed to do and
17 I'm hoping that a lot of them, in fact, did that.
18 We did this months ago out of my office.

19 But I appreciate the testimony again. I
20 think the data and the numbers say a lot that were
21 presented today.

22 MR. ECKLER: Thank you, Representative
23 Kulik.

24 Representative Gleim.

25 MS. GLEIM: Hi. Thank you. I have an

1 observation, and this may be a comment. On this
2 graph right here that you provided, it was No. 3, I
3 just want to make a general observation that I
4 think this is the problem, not Thanksgiving. Okay?
5 This is the problem. And just observing some of
6 the upticks on here, just go back to, you know,
7 1998, we had a stockmarket crash then and 2001
8 there's an uptick. That was 9-11. In 2008-2009
9 during the uptick, that was our economic downturn.
10 I mean you can almost see why we had the upticks
11 here. And in 2013 coming from the construction
12 industry where a lot of our men and women hunt, you
13 know, that was a bad construction year. But if you
14 take a look at this comprehensively and don't even
15 consider those reasons why we have the upticks,
16 it's going down over time.

17 So my question is, from the Game
18 Commission standpoint, you know, you're looking at
19 this data, did you do any type of a comprehensive
20 impact study on why this may be happening and all
21 of the things that you could be doing to enhance
22 it?

23 I mean some of the things that came up
24 were putting hunter safety courses in schools, the
25 Sunday hunting, the Saturday opener, social media

1 campaigns, and I would say that the percentage
2 increase is not significant if you don't factor in
3 the opportunity cost of all of the other things
4 that didn't happen during that week.

5 So what I'm asking for is maybe having
6 some forethought to this rather than just shooting
7 from the hip. Hey, let's just throw out a Saturday
8 opener and see if that gives us a little bit of an
9 uptick. And maybe because I'm new I didn't get any
10 type of impact study on this, but I would suggest,
11 before we make any other decision from here, doing
12 something more comprehensive based off of some of
13 the data that we just received.

14 MR. FREDERICKS: Madam Representative,
15 the purpose of me being here was to give you an
16 opportunity to speak directly to me, the final
17 decisionmaker, and one of the voters. But your
18 questions are very, very good. And I would
19 appreciate if you would give our executive
20 director, Bryan Burhans, a moment to explain some
21 of the things you just asked if you don't mind.

22 MR. BURHANS: To go back, I mean you're
23 right. That graph has declined since 1983. That's
24 the real big issue. I think when we look at this,
25 if we want to look at it from the economic business

1 side, the outdoor industries have been hurting for
2 some time now. There's a lot of turnover
3 nationwide in the outdoor industry as we see this
4 national decline of hunters, and as the agency, we
5 looked at and examined different opportunities. To
6 answer your one question, do we do other things
7 other than creating more opportunity? Absolutely.
8 We're doing a number things. Everything from
9 social media to out-on-the-ground events and trying
10 to get people involved in hunting.

11 why I think it's significant -- and
12 again, we can slice and dice this data all day long
13 and make inferences -- I would argue that, you
14 know, it was a positive. It wasn't in the red
15 because although more people were senior, I had
16 younger people coming in and buying licenses behind
17 them. So overall we saw something that was
18 positive. Is this the answer? It's only one year
19 of data. It's hard to make a prediction based on
20 one year of data what's going to happen, but at
21 least it is a change.

22 of all the surveys we do, the two things
23 that come up, and this is national and here in
24 Pennsylvania, the No. 1 reason people don't hunt is
25 time and No. 2 is a place to hunt. We're real

1 fortunate in Pennsylvania because we do have a lot
2 of places to hunt. And I would expect, especially
3 down here in this part of Pennsylvania, that you
4 would definitely hear from your constituents
5 because we all recognize that there was impact to
6 the camp culture.

7 I'm a member of a camp. I've been a
8 member of that camp culture during my life, and I
9 understand the change that that represented. But
10 also we have to remember that 75 percent of our
11 hunters don't hunt from camps, and those are a lot
12 of times the people that we hear from that this
13 really helped them because the kids were home from
14 college or they had another day to hunt. A lot of
15 them, the way they looked at it and what they said
16 to us was, you didn't take anything away from us.
17 You gave us an extra day.

18 Now, going back to the economics side of
19 it, it's very difficult when you look at -- it was
20 brought up earlier about -- well, you brought it
21 up -- about Dr. Jagnow and the predictions based on
22 that. It's very difficult to -- there's a lot of
23 static, if you will, in data when you ask somebody
24 well, if we did this, would you do that, and we
25 expect that. You know, you can't always determine

1 exactly what it is.

2 So, for example, we ask one question:
3 If we had a Saturday opener, would you buy a
4 license? And I won't give the exact numbers, but
5 there was a certain number that said no, we won't.
6 When we followed back up and say did they actually
7 not buy a license? Most of them did buy a license.
8 So what they say they'll do -- and we know this
9 about surveys -- what people say they want or say
10 they do and what they actually do are two different
11 things. It gives us an idea.

12 As far as an economics study, again it's
13 really hard to determine what is going to happen
14 because let's face it, it was mentioned earlier we
15 sent 27,000 extra bear hunters with a tag up to the
16 North Central area. That certainly had to have an
17 impact economically on the area, in addition to all
18 of the other opportunities that we had.

19 So although, granted, there could have
20 been -- because I've heard mixtures all over the
21 board -- I haven't seen a comprehensive study that
22 was done but, except, I got Clinton County. There
23 was, I think it was -- and I have it right here --
24 25 percent of them said, you know, it didn't affect
25 us or it did affect us.

1 MS. GLEIM: I just want to know, was
2 there any type of --

3 MR. BURHANS: No.

4 MS. GLEIM: -- thought process that led
5 you to believe that opening on Saturday instead of
6 Monday was the way to fix or to elevate this issue?

7 MR. BURHANS: And again, that goes back
8 to a commissioner's decision because it was a
9 commissioner recommendation. So they brought the
10 idea, and the reason was allowing more time. We
11 know that kids from college are home during that
12 spring or that break time. We know kids from high
13 school have that weekend that's available to them.
14 I can only -- that's really a comment for
15 Commissioner Fredericks. As far as economic study,
16 no.

17 MS. GLEIM: Thank you.

18 MR. ECKLER: Chairman Kortz.

19 MR. KORTZ: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and
20 thank you, Gentlemen, for your testimony this
21 evening. I greatly appreciate it. Very
22 insightful. As I said earlier, it's a very
23 passionate subject.

24 I want to thank the members that
25 attended here tonight, also. Many of them drove a

1 long distance to be here, so thank you all for
2 coming.

3 I also want to thank the audience for
4 being here this evening. And you participated in a
5 survey earlier, and if my math was correct -- and,
6 Representative Cook, it was a great question -- do
7 you want to move the opener back to Monday, and
8 just by glance, I thought I saw about 80 percent of
9 the hands up. Is that about right? would you
10 concur with about 80 percent out of about 80
11 people? well, there's 64.

12 Mr. Fredericks, where are you at? There
13 he is. There's 64 people right here, sir, that
14 want to go back to that.

15 MR. FREDERICKS: I'll take your word for
16 it, sir. I didn't count them.

17 MR. KORTZ: I'm going to do another
18 survey at the end, but first I want to go through
19 some of the history and share this with everybody
20 because Chairman Gillespie and I were deeply
21 involved in this when it went down.

22 when we heard about the Saturday start,
23 I, for one, the hair on the back of my neck stood
24 up because I'm a traditional camp guy and it cut
25 right into how we do -- what we do at our camp,

1 what I do.

2 So, you know, we had you guys in, and to
3 your credit, seven of the members showed up.

4 Mr. Daley had resigned by that point in time. So
5 you came in, honorable gentlemen. You came in, and
6 we had a discussion about this, Chairman Gillespie,
7 and I.

8 And it got pretty interesting, wouldn't
9 you say, Dennis? It was an interesting
10 conversation to say the least.

11 MR. FREDERICKS: Yes, sir.

12 MR. KORTZ: And one of the things that
13 stuck out in my mind was, Charlie Fox, the current
14 president, right, he's the elder gentleman, the
15 elder statesman, if you will, and when he spoke, I
16 mean he really brought some passion to that because
17 he's a traditional guy, and he only flipped on that
18 last day. He was one of the flippers, and he did
19 that because of the youth. He kept saying it's
20 because I want to get the youth involved in
21 hunting. I want to create more opportunity for the
22 youth. I understand that. I want more youth in
23 hunting, also. But I don't think we did it in the
24 right way. That's just my opinion.

25 But from that meeting, so everybody

1 knows, all the members here and everybody in the
2 audience, from that meeting we got a commitment
3 from the seven commissioners that they would
4 revisit this in the next hunting season. Well,
5 that's here now. So you're going to be taking this
6 up and you're going to be discussing this Saturday
7 start versus a Monday start versus possibly a
8 Sunday start if you're going to vote on that in
9 April.

10 Is that correct, Dennis?

11 MR. FREDERICKS: Currently the proposal
12 is for a Saturday start, and it's subject to public
13 input between now and April.

14 MR. KORTZ: Right. So you're going to
15 take the public input. So I want everybody to send
16 a letter to the Game Commission on how you feel
17 about this Saturday start or Monday start or maybe
18 put an idea out there for a Sunday start. But they
19 did come in. They're honorable gentlemen. They
20 did come in. They sat with us. They heard us out.
21 And Chairman Gillespie was pretty adamant and
22 myself, and they are going to take that into
23 consideration. They weren't going to just slam the
24 door. They're taking our feedback again.

25 Now, you took feedback last year and had

1 80 percent that said don't do it, but you did it
2 anyway. So if you get 80 percent this year,
3 Dennis, you'll be in the office again. You know
4 that. So please take the message back to
5 Charlie Fox and the whole group. If 80 percent of
6 the people say they want to move this back, we need
7 to consider that. And the problem is, and again
8 I'm a traditionalist, it is the Thanksgiving
9 holiday. You have Thanksgiving holiday. You spend
10 that time with your family and your kids. Then you
11 have Friday, and your kids are still there and
12 you're with your spouse and your family; right?
13 Typically you leave on Saturday. That was my keel,
14 and that cut into that. Okay? So we have an
15 opportunity to change it. And now that we voted
16 yes for Senate Bill 147 and Sunday hunting is now
17 law, we have the capability of possibly moving it
18 to a Sunday which is where I'm going with this.

19 My question is this, and I'd like to run
20 another survey of the group. If you can't get the
21 Saturday moved back to Monday, who here would go
22 along with a Sunday start? Raise your hand if
23 you're for a Sunday.

24 UNIDENTIFIED AUDIENCE MEMBER: We have
25 church on Sunday.

1 (Hands raised.)

2 MR. KORTZ: Okay. So a lot less folks.
3 A lot less folks. Because I saw that as the great
4 compromise. I saw that if you could have Saturday,
5 you could still be with your family and do the
6 other things and go to camp and help out the
7 businesses that are being impacted, like Truman's
8 store up in Jefferson County. Mr. Allen, who is
9 here tonight, was bringing that up to me. And I
10 know Senator Brewster is getting inundated with a
11 lot of the other businesses up in rural PA.
12 They're getting feedback slowly coming in to us
13 that it's really impacted them.

14 I appreciate, Randy, you bringing that
15 to the table today and talking about that because
16 that's one of the things that was hidden out there,
17 one of the unforeseen consequences. These people
18 depend -- their economic survivability in the
19 wintertime is with that weekend of all the hunters
20 rushing to camp. I was one of those guys going
21 down to Greene County. I would hit all the stores
22 and hit the business.

23 Randy, if you want to mention anything
24 about that again, you're welcome. But that's a big
25 impact.

1 MR. SANTUCCI: Absolutely. That was the
2 part of this, I think, when I contacted the ten
3 businesses and I picked big ones from Grice's, the
4 largest one in the state, down to the mom and pop
5 stores. And the thing that struck me the most is,
6 I didn't call 30 stores and cherry pick ten. The
7 ten I called, all: Boom. They were already
8 writing letters, some of them. So this was
9 something that became very clear. This was a big
10 problem. And they all identified -- they discussed
11 this with their neighboring businesses the same
12 problems. You know, they said boy, this was
13 terrible. We lost -- one lady from -- what's her
14 name? Peggy from Kane, PA, Paul's Trading Post I
15 believe it was, if you read her letter, I mean this
16 struck me because she made the comment regarding
17 this is the first time in my life I don't know if
18 I'm going to be able to pay my gas bill this
19 winter. Because they depended on that \$2,000 or
20 \$3,000 bump over that weekend and they got about 90
21 bucks.

22 You know, the big stores are one.
23 That's a big number. Grice, 200,000. But Grice
24 will survive. But the other stores, the smaller
25 places, the restaurants, the diners, the fire

1 departments, all of those lost from this.

2 So when you look at the fact we only had
3 a slight -- now, we talked about the youth.

4 Charlie mentioned, you know, about the youth. And
5 I mentioned earlier the four youth categories were
6 still down total. One went up to nonresident a
7 little bit, but three out of the four went down.

8 So the total was down. So our youth categories
9 still declined, and this was targeted for that 18
10 to 21, 18 to 34. We told you what happened with
11 the 22 to 34, 12 licenses, and you only sold 1,067
12 licenses to the 18 to 21s.

13 So we reached a few people, you know,
14 over last year, maybe a few more even in the
15 make-up of last year's losses, but it just doesn't
16 wash. You know, what we did to the traditions....

17 I made a point obviously of researching
18 this thoroughly, and I talked to a bunch of camp
19 guys stopping in around my camp and all over. With
20 God as my witness, I have yet to talk to one group
21 of camp owners -- and I brought some stuff with me
22 even to show -- we're cutting out, and I think
23 Bryan mentioned, 25 percent of our hunters still
24 hunt from camps and seasonal homes. Approximately.
25 Approximately.

1 MR. BURHANS: That's correct.

2 MR. SANTUCCI: That's a quarter, you
3 know. You're looking at maybe 200,000, 240,000
4 hunters that you've drastically changed their
5 tradition.

6 But, Bill, you have a camp. You pay
7 taxes. You do maintenance. You have utilities.
8 That money travels to those little tourism, those
9 towns. Hunting is an intrastate tourism issue. A
10 big one. And we're just, like, deciding that we're
11 going to be okay with selling a couple thousand
12 licenses to the Game Commission and we're going to
13 throw all of these businesses under the bus. I
14 don't understand this at all. This is what's
15 frustrating me as a sportsman, as a resident; that
16 we're doing something here that's hurting a lot of
17 people, millions of dollars in this state,
18 thousands of businesses. If we had come back with
19 a bunch of licenses sold in all of these
20 categories, guess what? I wouldn't be here
21 tonight. But it didn't happen. So that's the
22 problem.

23 MR. KORTZ: That economic impact is
24 huge, and I know that's starting to roll in here.

25 I do want to relay something else. Two

1 miles from our camp in Greene County is another
2 camp, and you've probably heard of this thing.
3 Rich Trumka, He's a president of the AFL-CIO
4 International and I go over there every year on
5 Sunday. When I walked into his camp, he wanted to
6 rip my head off. "How dare you move this." I
7 said, "whoa, time out, Rich. I didn't move this.
8 I was against the Saturday start." He was irate, I
9 mean just absolutely irate, because this is a big
10 tradition down in his camp with 15 other guys. And
11 he said how he had to leave the Thanksgiving table
12 and he caused upheaval at his house. Oh my gosh, I
13 couldn't wait to get out of there because he wanted
14 to rip my head off because I couldn't convince him
15 that I didn't do this. But I'm going to relay his
16 side of it. He said this is going to cause
17 divorces. Someone else said it here tonight. And
18 that came straight from the president of the
19 AFL-CIO who is completely incensed over the
20 Saturday start, as well as I am, to be quite honest
21 with you.

22 MR. SANTUCCI: I didn't get into the
23 anecdotal stuff which you're mentioning here
24 because I felt the case was stronger made on the
25 license sales and the economic impact.

1 The anecdotal side of this is enormous,
2 but you can't sell that because it's not in hard
3 numbers and it's not -- you know, how do you sell
4 lost tradition? Or a commissioner that makes a
5 comment that I have, not Mr. Fredericks -- and I'll
6 give him the courtesy because Denny was not one of
7 the ones that made some of these comments -- but I
8 heard a comment from one commissioner say, I never
9 heard any opposition about this in my area. This
10 commissioner had a county in this area, right, take
11 a vote, and put it in the paper that they opposed
12 this change. I got two of the businesses that are
13 in the packet are in the top five businesses in the
14 northeast, sporting goods stores, that were
15 strongly against this and made comments that 90
16 percent were against it. Another comment was, I
17 never seen hunters angered so much about this.

18 So here's a commissioner that says, I
19 didn't hear any opposition. How did I find it?
20 You know, that's what bothers me. And we're going
21 to take this back now again and put it in the hands
22 of the same commissioners to assess this again
23 after we just went through this mountain of
24 evidence, and these business now are going to go --
25 and if we put the Sunday on after the Saturday,

1 more economic impact.

2 MR. KORTZ: Right. Well, I know time is
3 running late, and I just wanted to wrap up by
4 saying please, everyone, you heard today that
5 they're taking comments. So make sure you get your
6 comments to the Game Commission on where you stand
7 with the Saturday start versus Monday start versus
8 possibly a Sunday start, but send them the
9 feedback, and I look forward to the vote.

10 when is that, Dennis, so we can all
11 attend?

12 MR. FREDERICKS: April 6th.

13 MR. BURHANS: 7th.

14 MR. KORTZ: April 7th. So, everybody,
15 you're invited April 7th to come up and watch the
16 vote.

17 Right; Dennis?

18 MR. FREDERICKS: Write it down.

19 MR. KORTZ: Okay. Thank you,
20 Mr. Chairman.

21 MR. ECKLER: Mr. Daub, I know you wanted
22 to say something.

23 MR. DAUB: It's actually a good segway.
24 Thank you, Bill.

25 I just wanted to let everybody know that

1 as a witness -- and Randy set Saturday in the
2 auditorium that day as well -- if my numbers were
3 correct -- and maybe you have better numbers than
4 me -- but I believe there were 27 people who spoke
5 in person in the January Game Commission meeting
6 which is the process for this game management, and
7 I believe out of the 27, around 20 or 21 voted in
8 favor of the Saturday opener, and I was on the
9 fence because my organization is undecided at this
10 point.

11 So, you know, I recently ran the
12 Facebook poll that was shared through many, many
13 groups within Facebook, and I understand there may
14 be some bias there thinking that it's only young
15 people on Facebook. Well, I can tell you my 80-
16 year-old mother, before she passed, was a
17 Facebooker. So it's not just young people out
18 there.

19 So I'm not here to defend the Game
20 Commission. I'm willing to fight when the fight
21 needs to be taken to them, but when the
22 commissioners sit there and listen to 21 out of 27
23 supporting the Saturday opener, we have to work the
24 process. And that's the point that PFSC would like
25 to make. We believe we have a good process here.

1 So let's get out on April 7th, for or
2 against, and do it. I'm not aware of any rally
3 that was put out for or against for the January
4 meeting. I think that was a pretty organic result.
5 And it was pretty much 65 or 70 percent of the
6 people thought Saturday was okay.

7 MR. SANTUCCI: I think, Harold, the
8 problem there, when you see what's happened is --
9 there's a gentleman sitting here today. He called
10 me yesterday. Is it Jack?

11 UNIDENTIFIED AUDIENCE MEMBER: Right
12 here.

13 MR. SANTUCCI: I never met him before.
14 He just found out and he called me. And he made
15 the comment to me, and you can reiterate if I'm
16 telling the truth, that all the camps around him
17 are against this, but a lot of them said what are
18 we gonna do? They didn't listen to us last spring.
19 When they all came out and said no, they didn't
20 listen to us. Is that not true?

21 (Clapping.)

22 MR. SANTUCCI: So when you get 27 people
23 come -- and you see my point -- it's because the
24 agency, they feel, didn't listen to them over this
25 when we came out last year about this.

1 MR. MALONEY: So you're sitting in front
2 of the voice of the people.

3 MR. SANTUCCI: Absolutely. I don't see
4 that's -- and again, I'll go back to if the license
5 sales blew up and everybody loved this, like I said
6 I wouldn't be here. But like I said, the hunters
7 have resigned to the fact -- if I'm not mistaken,
8 Denny Fillmore wrote an article in the Pennsylvania
9 Outdoor News not too long ago calling out the Game
10 Commission Board of Commissioners that they do not
11 listen to the hunters.

12 Am I not correct in that?

13 UNIDENTIFIED AUDIENCE MEMBER: They
14 don't listen to anything.

15 MR. SANTUCCI: So the president of the
16 federation even recognized because this upset him,
17 too, you know. So there's even --

18 MR. MALONEY: I'm going to give a shout
19 out to the commissioner who is sitting right behind
20 you because in my time here, only twice was I ever
21 approached by a commissioner. Only twice. And
22 tonight is the first time in my time that a
23 commissioner actually sat on the panel and took
24 questions. Okay?

25 So let's give credit where credit is

1 told. That was an individual raccoon hunter that
2 stood up there and presented some information. And
3 this board, I've been working with the Game
4 Commission. I've been a hunter ed. instructor for
5 over 20 years, and I've been going to this meeting
6 in Harrisburg probably since the '80s. I will say
7 that this board that we have today is as
8 cooperative and dedicated to bringing opportunity
9 to Pennsylvania hunters as any that I've seen as a
10 board since 1980.

11 So, Representative Maloney, I have a
12 hunter ed. class this Saturday, and I'm really
13 excited. There's 80 students registered in it.

14 MR. MALONEY: That's great.

15 MR. DAUB: I used to have one school in
16 Upper Dauphin County that allowed me to have a
17 class at their school, and it was allowed because
18 the principal was a certified hunter ed.
19 instructor.

20 We need to find more than just the
21 venue. We need to find the volunteer instructors
22 as well.

23 MR. MALONEY: Without a doubt. But I
24 think the venue does help in the fact that -- I'll
25 go a little bit further. As a former school

1 director, I know what policy does, and when policy
2 blocks you from coming in --

3 MR. DAUB: Absolutely.

4 MR. MALONEY: -- remember, my
5 legislation has to do with hunters, and the people
6 who own those schools should have the opportunity
7 to use them. So it's a good point.

8 MR. DAUB: Yeah. Now, in my district as
9 the hunter ed. coordinator, I don't have a problem
10 with venue. I do have a problem with time for
11 students. And when the Millersburg School District
12 had hunter education classes offered as a club for
13 one hour for six weeks, every kid in Millersburg
14 pretty much went through that. I got very few of
15 them in my classes outside of that.

16 So I'd love to work with you on your
17 hunter ed. idea. I'd love to sit down with you and
18 talk about that.

19 MR. SANTUCCI: I'd like to just end with
20 one last thought if I can. What concerns me a bit,
21 too, is I, as a 48-year consecutive hunting license
22 buyer, as a lot of guys probably in this room are,
23 the concern being put on the hunter that could not
24 see it clear to -- you know, I purchased my license
25 over the years. Now, Bryan will know I would

1 disagree on some deer management policies and
2 different things over the years --

3 MR. BURHANS: Noooo.

4 MR. SANTUCCI: No; but I also bought my
5 license supporting this agency. I have a problem
6 with us doing so much to reach out for a hunter
7 that sees no other reason to buy a license other
8 than changing of one day. The seasons are so long.
9 They are so many species. You know, I would buy my
10 license if I broke my leg and couldn't go the rest
11 of the season. I'd buy my license. And to make
12 this change, to throw under your traditional
13 hunters, the guys that have been loyal to this
14 agency for half a century, to be concerned about
15 some hunters that can't see fit to buy a license
16 unless we change one day, that frustrates me and it
17 bothers me.

18 So my point is, let's go back. Like I
19 mentioned earlier, we jumped over the dollars to
20 get to the pennies here. I mean if we can get this
21 back to a Monday and then work with the Sundays
22 after that, I think this would be wonderful.

23 Thank you.

24 MR. ECKLER: Great. You know, we've
25 had, I think, a great robust conversation, colorful

1 conversation today but cordial, and, you know, I
2 think the Game Commission has its work cut out for
3 it here. And, you know, I just implore, you know,
4 everyone in the room, everybody who watches this,
5 everybody out there, you know, it's been said by
6 everybody up here tonight we can't advocate for
7 things that we don't know what to advocate for.

8 So even if you think your voice is not
9 being heard, it's certainly not a time to sit back
10 and give up. So if you truly feel passionate about
11 something, you need to let these folks know.

12 Whether it's you personally, your representative,
13 your respective agencies, or groups that support
14 you, it's very important to let your voice be
15 heard. And you've heard that from everybody here
16 today.

17 And, you know, I want to thank our panel
18 today. I want to thank everyone who is here and
19 gave their testimony. And before we get going
20 here, I want to turn it over to Representative Cook
21 who was gracious enough to organize this and
22 welcome us to his district.

23 Representative Cook, why don't you see
24 us on out.

25 MR. COOK: Well, first and foremost, I

1 want to thank Chairman Gillespie who couldn't be
2 with us tonight. He's ill. And our panel as well.

3 Believe it or not, you have some really
4 avid outdoorsmen on this board. You're talking to
5 somebody who ran a trap line ten miles when he was
6 in high school. I didn't shoot my first deer until
7 I was 40. It was always a family tradition. Not
8 that I didn't have the shots.

9 But look, this is about faith, family,
10 and future. And I don't believe that people
11 understand the passion that we have here, not only
12 in the 49th, but in the entire Southwestern
13 Pennsylvania. It's almost a religion.

14 Thanksgiving, I can remember you went
15 out and hunted small game all morning; you came in;
16 you ate Thanksgiving dinner; you watched the
17 football game. And you had Friday. Saturday you
18 shot your gun in; you did the camp. Sunday you
19 went out and you did the scouting and you were out
20 in the woods on Monday.

21 So look, we represent you. You have to
22 have your voice heard out there, and that's why
23 we're here. This isn't about us. It's not about
24 us as individuals. It's about you, the people, and
25 we're trying to do the best possible job that we

1 can.

2 So I want to thank each and every one of
3 you. Don't give up the fight. I had a gentleman
4 turn around and leave today because he couldn't
5 speak. Okay? Unfortunately, that's not how the
6 process works up here. But the process does not
7 end here tonight. They need to hear it from us.

8 I was in advertising for many, many
9 years, and I used to tell the clients advertising
10 works 50 percent of the time. I just can't tell
11 you which 50 percent.

12 So keep your comments, those e-mails,
13 contact the commission. Everybody truly is trying
14 to do the best job we can here, and we do care
15 about it. And again, thanks to all the committee
16 members. Appreciate it.

17 MR. ECKLER: Thank you, Bud, and thank
18 you, Chairman Kortz, and thanks to everybody else
19 that's here. Let's have a good night.

20 (Clapping.)

21 (The hearing concluded at 6:55 p.m.)

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C E R T I F I C A T E

I hereby certify that the
proceedings and evidence are contained
fully and accurately in the
stenographic notes taken by me on the
hearing of the within cause and that
this is a correct transcript of the
same.

Pamela J. Rose, Court Reporter