



Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen & Conservationists

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On the Front Lines – So You Can Be in the Woods, On the Water or At the Range!

House Game and Fisheries Committee

9/21/22, 12:00 p.m., Room 205, Ryan Office Building

By Grace Kline, Pennsylvania Legislative Services

Video:  [\(click here\)](#)

The committee met to consider one bill.

SB 431 Laughlin, Daniel - (PN 451) Amends Title 34 (Games) providing for the sale of antlerless deer hunting licenses through the Game Commission's Pennsylvania Automated Licensing System. Effective in 60 days. - The bill was **reported as committed** with Representatives Joe Hamm (R-Lycoming) and Parke Wentling (R-Mercer) voting in the negative.

Sen. Daniel Laughlin (R-Erie), primary sponsor of the bill, provided a brief description of his legislation. He said, "It's a long overdue change to update and modernize this." He continued, "Things have changed a lot. This is just, in my opinion, a much-needed update to modernize this system. I think...this is one of the last things in America that you can't buy online."

Rep. David Maloney (R-Berks) asked how counties would receive revenue moving forward with this. He asserted counties typically knew they would get a certain amount of money from licenses. Sen. Laughlin replied the allocation is up to the Game Commission (PGC), but each county treasurer that processes an antlerless license gets a dollar. He said he heard from numerous individuals that their treasurer would not be on board with this because of the revenue it brings in. "The financial edge on this...is just talking going forward," he stated. Rep. Maloney explained he wanted to "assess the pros and cons." He asked how a county would know what they could help with if they were a distributor when it went to PGC's Pennsylvania Automated Licensing System (PALS). Sen. Laughlin responded it would be similar to how it is now with any licensing issues. Rep. Maloney asked about protections when considering system failures. Sen. Laughlin stated if the system goes down it would be similar to how it is now and it is "not problematic enough" to stop providing licenses.

Josh Zimmerman, legislative liaison, PGC, asserted the conversations on the issue revolve around customer convenience. "The idea would be to bump up that first round of antlerless tags so you'd be able to go purchase your general tag and your antlerless tag at the same time," he said. "It would not be two stops." Rep. Maloney stated that is why he asked the question because it is a major change to what would have been a normal routine. He asked what would change. Zimmerman replied it would still be a first-come, first-served basis and Pennsylvania residents "absolutely get the first crack at it."

Rep. Maloney asked how the PALS system would be able to handle or prepare to handle this major change. Minority Chairman Ed Neilson (D-Philadelphia) stated system liability has nothing to do with this legislation. "Things happen," he remarked. "We just hope that they keep on the technology investment, and from the annual reports we see that they do that well." Zimmerman added it is still the same system and they are talking about expanding it to every agent out there. Rep. Maloney acknowledged it is the same system but now people can do it from their living rooms. He said, "I just want to make sure...when we get the questions, I always can go back and say we were assured that that wouldn't happen." Zimmerman noted the licensing system is the same for every agent.

Rep. Barry Jozwiak (R-Berks) asked if the number of how many antlerless licenses someone can buy online at one time is limited. Zimmerman responded individuals can only buy one at a time. Rep. Jozwiak commented, "This is a good bill...It's time that the law moves along with technology."

Rep. Jason Silvis (R-Westmoreland) indicated certain counties only have a certain number of licenses available and asked how that will work. Sen. Laughlin replied that would stay the same. Rep. Silvis stated every county and even every district is different. He asked if that will be determined by plugging in the zip code or county someone is applying for. Zimmerman explained a lot of the antlerless applications now have options to put in top three choices in case one is out.

Rep. Mindy Fee (R-Lancaster) asked what someone should do if they cannot access an online application because they are not used to technology. Sen. Laughlin responded they would be able to go to a license issuer and get it there. Rep. Maloney asked if the issuing agent would then go on the PALS system and get it and if the person applying would be able to leave with it. Sen. Laughlin replied they will print it out right there and hand it to the individual.

Rep. Ann Flood (R-Northampton) explained under the current process a county gets one dollar for every antlerless application. She asked if a county would get anything back if people are doing it online. Zimmerman clarified the dollar will go to whoever sells it, such as the online vendor. He said when applications are done online, PGC does not get revenue.

Chairman Neilson commended the legislation. "Just a great piece of legislation," he said. "I appreciate you guys bringing it over here."

Sen. Laughlin provided one final comment from his caucus discussion yesterday. He stated it could be one county treasurer opposed to this compared to the 30,000-40,000 who support this.

Chairman Keith Gillespie (R-York) said, "This is long overdue."

Rep. Thomas Mehaffie (R-Dauphin) thanked Chairman Gillespie for his leadership with the committee and remarked, "One of the main reasons I stayed on this committee was you."

Chairman Neilson echoed Rep. Mehaffie's remarks, thanking Chairman Gillespie "for all you've done for the sportsmen throughout Pennsylvania." He said, "I think this is the first time, since the committee was formed, the Democratic and Republican chair went hunting together. The first time."

Chairman Gillespie stated, "It has been an absolute honor and privilege."

Sen. Laughlin thanked Chairman Gillespie for his leadership.