



Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen & Conservationists

2426 North Second St. • Harrisburg, PA 17110

Phone: 717-232-3480

info@pfsc.org • www.pfsc.org

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

Senate Game and Fisheries Committee

9/20/23, 10:00 a.m., Room 8E-B, East Wing

By Wade Davis, Pennsylvania Legislative Services

Committee(s):	Senate Game and Fisheries Committee
Meeting type:	Public hearing
Subject:	Online sales of licenses for the Pennsylvania Game Commission
Bills discussed:	(N/A)
Keyword(s):	licenses, hunting, fishing, outdoors, recreation
Testimony:	Bryan Burhans , executive director, Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC) Dan Dunlap , director, Bureau of Administrative Services, PGC Tammy Klinger , license division chief, PGC
Members Present:	Chairman Greg Rothman (R-Cumberland), Minority Chairman Jim Brewster (D-Allegheny) and Senators Dan Laughlin (R-Erie), Scott Hutchinson (R-Venango) and Lindsey Williams (D-Allegheny)

Chairman Rothman disclosed the meeting as an opportunity to question the Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC) about its online licensing system that was implemented over the summer. He specified the system encountered difficulties on [June 26](#) when antlerless deer licenses were available for purchase online.

Minority Chairman Brewster related his own experience purchasing a license online, and he noted over a hundred others joined him in line to pick up the license despite the system's issues.

[Bryan Burhans](#), Executive Director, PGC, provided details on PGC's online system. He explained how, despite PGC's readiness, the number of sales of general licenses and antlerless deer licenses caused the system to halt during its June 26 rollout. He indicated that by the end of the first day, PGC had sold 166,108 general hunting licenses and 164,666 antlerless licenses, which was "far and away the number one sales date on record in the Game Commission's history." He added since the system's implementation, PGC has sold 636,030 general hunting licenses, 1,030,806 antlerless deer licenses and 2,657,245 licenses, permits and privileges in total across all categories. He noted that 2023's figures are a 10.5 percent increase from sales in 2022.

Burhans continued by detailing PGC's focus on the slowdown and its desire to avoid future challenges. He explained he met with hunters across the commonwealth to identify their needs for PGC's online system. Despite the slowdowns, Burhans affirmed that Pennsylvanian hunters were not angry with the new system. He concluded his remarks by maintaining the system's effectiveness and stating that he looks forward to the system's future.

Sen. Laughlin, author of the bill that led to PGC's online system, Senate Bill 431 of 2021, shared his experience waiting in line at Walmart to receive his license. He echoed comments that many of the sportsmen waiting in line were not mad with the system's delays. He asserted the hunters may have wanted to experience the new method of obtaining a hunting license. He continued by stating he was able to purchase his license later that same day with no problems.

Sen. Laughlin expressed his anticipation the online system would not have the same issues during next year's sales. He suggested hunters would discuss their expectations for next year with each other in preparation. He emphasized making it easier for hunters to get outside and enjoy their hobby. He requested details on hunting license sales compared to previous years and Burhans' thoughts on the online system. Burhans repeated that 2023 experienced a 10.5 percent increase in its sales compared to 2022. He argued the ease of the online system has helped younger Pennsylvanians partake in hunting. He detailed how on the day of the system's launch, which was "quite tense," his conversations with hunters revealed they were not angry or upset.

Sen. Laughlin stated he had similar conversations with hunters about the system and he suggested the hunters "wanted to be a part of it." Burhans argued the old way of physically mailing PGC to obtain a license created a culture that did not emphasize speed. "This is about convenience," he commented. "Go when you're ready." Sen. Laughlin related that his two sons would have never received an antlerless deer license if he did not mail a check for them. He asserted the online system has "helped a lot" with sales as younger generations prefer other methods. He expressed interest in the system's future, citing the 10.5 percent increase.

Chairman Brewster inquired whether PGC staff was present at the meeting, to which Burhans replied in the negative. He thanked Sen. Laughlin for his work on the bill and his willingness to speak with those in the Democratic Party. He argued the country's mail service is not as reliable as in the past. He wondered if PGC had costs related to its system's creation. Burhans responded PGC follows commonwealth purchasing guidelines and the technology company that made the system was identified through the guidelines. Dan Dunlap, Bureau of Administrative Services Director, PGC, answered that PGC goes through a request for purchase process that is designed to allow the system's developer, Texas-based Tyler Technologies, to have a system in place before the system goes live and before they are paid. He added the contract was developed prior to the system's implementation. He estimated that over the 10-year contract, Tyler Technologies could make \$40 million through percentages of each sale.

Chairman Brewster suggested the system "worked pretty well." He noted that the clerk of the issuing agency he visited was nervous because of the number of people in line. He reiterated how nobody was angry and they understood the system's implementation.

Chairman Rothman sought details on the retail process of hunter licenses. Tammy Klinger, license division chief, PGC, responded the commission has sent emails to over 600 license-issuing agents with details on the multiple "rounds" of license sales. She indicated PGC has not had time to conduct an after-action report with the agents to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the system. She affirmed PGC tries to plan for any negative situations for the licensing agents. She specified the latest round of sales only recently started, so the information is not readily available.

Chairman Rothman wondered if there are plans to limit who can apply for a license on the first day of the 2024 hunting license sales to avoid slowdowns. Burhans replied PGC would like to remain with the online system because of its convenience. He stated PGC would communicate with hunters more to provide them with information relevant to using the online system. He added that the "dramatic increase" in license sales drove many individuals to the online system. He emphasized PGC making sure hunters are informed about its online system before next year's sales.

Chairman Rothman thanked Burhans for his comments and willingness to address the problems with the PGC's system.