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Assembly Bill 407 – Snowmobile Registration and Trail Aids
Assembly Committee on Tourism
Testimony by State Rep. Mary Czaja
November 13, 2013

Thank you, Chairman Kaufert and members of the Tourism Committee for holding a public hearing on Assembly Bill 407 today.

We are here to talk about snowmobiling. A confession first – my friends and family will tell you, they’ve all heard me say more than once – “I’d rather snowmobile, than even eat!” I’m a lifelong snowmobiler, my kids, family, and many friends are all loyal riders too. I know many here in the room today feel the same way I do– snowmobiling isn’t just a joyride or a one weekend adventure, it’s a way of life. We care about our sport, we are responsible stewards of the land and trail system, and we work hard to have a program we can all be proud of and pass on to future riders. Some of my best memories have been made snowmobiling, and for those of you who have never given it a try – it’s just plain fun.

Wisconsin is the nation’s leader in snowmobiling – we have Department of Tourism staff here today, who will provide a thorough overview of the tremendous economic impact snowmobiling brings to the state. Snowmobiling was founded in Wisconsin; in fact next time you’re up in the Eagle River area, make sure to stop at the International Snowmobile Hall of Fame. It is a proud heritage for our state, and riders from across the country come to enjoy our trails and fill our lodging, restaurants, and local taverns.

However, the simple reality is – a trail system of this size and magnitude does require money. Wisconsin maintains the most extensive trail system in the country, with over 25,000 miles of trails. The trails require grooming, brushing, signage, and infrastructure maintenance on bridges and roadways. This work is not glamorous, but for decades local club member volunteers and county staff have proudly maintained a trail system that is unrivaled anywhere else in the USA.

They perform incredible work without the support of any state GPR dollars. I will say that again – no state general funds are used to support the snowmobile program. Rather, the program is funded by registration fees and registration renewals on snowmobiles, a portion of the gas tax formula, and out-of-state riders who currently must purchase an annual trail sticker pass in order to use Wisconsin's trails (their snowmobile is registered in another state). The DNR is responsible for administering these funds.

The funds generated from these three revenue sources are seldom, if ever, enough to cover the required county trail maintenance, project requests, and supplemental aid that are needed to keep the program running. The trend has been especially troubling in recent years – in fact, for Fiscal Year 2014 the DNR now estimates there will be no funds available for project grants. We have staff available here from the DNR who can further explain specifics of the program funds.

The fund shortfall has been particularly troubling over the last decade, as snowfall amounts have varied widely, and in a few instances winter has come and gone with hardly any snow at all. This causes snowmobile program funds to fluctuate, as registrations drop and fewer out of state riders plan Wisconsin trips. The impact is particularly brutal in northern Wisconsin, where many mom-and-pop businesses rely on the snowmobile season just to be able to keep their doors open. Local clubs have done their best to make up the shortfalls and have organized amazing fundraisers, in some instances generating tens of thousands of additional dollars for operating expenses. However, there are only a very few clubs of the size and strength to be able to generate significant revenue that way, and even those locals have nearly exhausted their resources and volunteer manpower. This pattern is simply not sustainable.

So – what is the answer? Several of us are fairly new to this committee; but as the Chairman can attest, this is far from a new issue to the Legislature. In fact, some version of this bill, AB 407, has been introduced in nearly every session since at least the year 2000. There has been no shortage of discussion or diversity of opinions on this issue, however, one thing has always been missing – a clear solution and compromise.

AB 407 is that compromise. In its simplest form, AB 407 provides an additional mechanism for generating the revenue needed for the snowmobile program to survive and maintain its independence from the state general fund. The creation of an annual state trail pass brings Wisconsin on par with other neighboring states, including Michigan and Minnesota. One key difference from past versions of this legislation is registration remains the same, at its current \$30.00 two-year cycle. This provides an element of stability to the fund, and ensures that there would be available funds even in years with low snowfall.

This bill also aims to strengthen local club membership for snowmobile riders, to encourage involvement and volunteerism within the clubs. It is the volunteers who ultimately make our trail system possible, and entire generations of older volunteers are entering their sunset years. Without new recruits and willing active participants, the system will be broken. By providing a discount on the trail pass for local club members, the legislation aims to bring new lifeblood into the clubs and to plan for the future.

There is no doubt about it; AB 407 is a compromise bill. It's often said, perhaps you know the sign of a good bill when no one group got everything they wanted. And that is the case here, all stakeholders came to the table and committed to protecting the sport and industry we all love. AB 407 is supported by the Governor's Council on Snowmobile Recreation, and was recommended by their board on October 3rd, 2013. The bill is also supported by the Association of Wisconsin Snowmobile Clubs, including dozens of local chapters and Alliances around the state. Recognizing the critical impact of snowmobiling on the tourism and hospitality industries in our state, the Wisconsin Tavern League and Wisconsin Hotel & Lodging Association also strongly support this legislation.

These snowmobilers and group of trail users are asking for the ability to help themselves. They love and support this sport, and without them winter in Wisconsin would never be the same. Please pass AB 407, and ensure that snowmobiling remains our proud tradition.



State Senator
Rick Gudex

District 18

November 13, 2013

To: The Assembly Committee on Tourism
From: Sen. Rick Gudex
Re: **Assembly Bill 407**

This bill is the result of several years of negotiation, compromise, and hard work on behalf of many different groups and people, especially those inside the snowmobile community.

Snowmobiling is a huge economic driver in Wisconsin. Some estimates put the impact at over \$1 billion annually, thanks to the dollars injected into local economies through tourism, and because of the 25,000 miles of scenic beauty our trails provide each year. And the taxpayers of Wisconsin spend nothing to make this happen – it is all funded through licenses, fees, and gas taxes paid by the snowmobilers themselves.

But we have a problem: the snowmobile fund is underfunded, and has been for years. As a result, the reimbursements for keeping Wisconsin's snowmobile trails open and groomed aren't keeping up with the needs.

Assembly Bill 407 was written specifically to solve this problem.

It will hopefully also solve a second problem: the lack of volunteer manpower available through the snowmobile clubs to keep that 25,000 miles maintained. While the snowmobile fund helps pay the cost of trail maintenance, volunteer snowmobilers provide the labor. Snowmobile clubs need to continue attracting new members to keep this sport thriving.

That is why the Association of Wisconsin Snowmobile Clubs (AWSC) has asked for the two-tier "CAP/STEP" system: snowmobilers will pay \$35 for a trail pass, or can pay only \$15 if they also join an AWSC-certified snowmobile club. The idea is to encourage membership and hopefully find some new volunteers.

I realize that this is a fee increase. Under the bill, resident snowmobilers will be paying probably \$35 more per snow machine per year. I'm sensitive to that. I didn't run for office to raise taxes and fees.

But the bottom line is, the snowmobile fund is in trouble, and with it go Wisconsin's snowmobile trails. More importantly, **snowmobilers themselves are asking for this.** They've been asking for this for several years now, knowing very well what it would mean to the sport. Wisconsin's snowmobilers want to keep their sport strong, without relying on the state or on the taxpayers to do it for them. I say we should let them do that.

At the end of the day, this bill will simply help snowmobilers do what they are asking us for, and what they are already doing: providing great snowmobile trails for themselves and for thousands of others. I urge your support.

Snowmobile Account FY '06 thru FY '15

Finance Committee of the Snowmobile Recreation Council Meeting Sunday July 21, 2013

Amounts in Millions		2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	EST. 2013	Estimated 2014 2015	
1	BEGINNING CASH BALANCE								\$ 4.5		
	AVAILABLE CASH BALANCE									\$ 0.7	\$ 0.9
	REVENUES										
2	Registration Revenues (1)	\$ 4.5	\$ 3.9	\$ 4.5	\$ 4.8	\$ 4.4	\$ 4.8	\$ 3.4	\$ 4.0	\$ 3.7	\$ 3.7
3	Gas Tax for Aids	\$ 4.6	\$ 4.5	\$ 4.5	\$ 4.6	\$ 4.8	\$ 4.9	\$ 5.1	\$ 4.5	\$ 4.8	\$ 4.8
4	Stewardship Development/Maintenance Aids	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	TBD	TBD
5	Total Revenues	\$ 9.1	\$ 8.4	\$ 9.0	\$ 9.4	\$ 9.2	\$ 9.7	\$ 8.5	\$ 8.5	\$ 8.5	\$ 8.5
	EXPENDITURES										
	Trail and Project Aids										
6	Maintenance Aids	\$ 4.8	\$ 4.5	\$ 4.8	\$ 4.9	\$ 4.9	\$ 4.3	\$ 4.6	\$ 4.5	\$ 4.7	\$ 4.7
7	Supplemental Aids	\$ 1.9	\$ 2.0	\$ 1.0	\$ 2.4	\$ 2.1	\$ 2.4	\$ 2.2	\$ 1.0	\$ 2.3	\$ 2.3
8	Project Grants	\$ 1.5	\$ 1.5	\$ 1.2	\$ 1.3	\$ 1.3	\$ 1.0	\$ 1.3	\$ 1.0	-	TBD
9	Total Trail and Project Aids	\$ 8.2	\$ 8.0	\$ 7.0	\$ 8.7	\$ 8.3	\$ 7.7	\$ 8.0	\$ 6.5	\$ 7.0	\$ 7.0
	OTHER										
10	Local Law Enforcement Assistance	\$ 0.4	\$ 0.3	\$ 0.3	\$ 0.4	\$ 0.4	\$ 0.4	\$ 0.4	\$ 0.3	\$ 0.4	\$ 0.4
11	DNR Operating Expenses	\$ 0.8	\$ 0.8	\$ 1.0	\$ 1.0	\$ 1.1	\$ 1.0	\$ 0.8	\$ 0.8	\$ 0.9	\$ 0.9
12	Total Other	\$ 1.2	\$ 1.1	\$ 1.3	\$ 1.4	\$ 1.5	\$ 1.4	\$ 1.2	\$ 1.1	\$ 1.3	\$ 1.3
13	Total Expenditures	\$ 9.4	\$ 9.1	\$ 8.3	\$ 10.1	\$ 9.8	\$ 9.1	\$ 9.2	\$ 7.6	\$ 8.3	\$ 8.3
14	Net Income/Loss	\$ (0.3)	\$ (0.7)	\$ 0.7	\$ (0.7)	\$ (0.6)	\$ 0.6	\$ (0.7)	\$ 0.9	\$ 0.2	\$ 0.2
	OUTSTANDING OBLIGATIONS										
15	Outstanding Encumbrances								\$ (3.5)	\$ -	\$ -
16	Pending Grants								\$ (0.6)	\$ -	\$ -
17	Supplemental Trail Pass								\$ (0.6)	\$ -	\$ -
18	Available Cash Balance								\$ 0.7	\$ 0.9	\$ 1.0

(1) Includes miscellaneous revenues

Registered User Snowmobiling Fees in Midwestern States

State	Trail Miles	Registered Snowmobiles	Registration Fee	Trail Pass Required	Annual Trail Pass Fee	Registered User Avg Annual Cost/Yr
Wisconsin (Current Law)	25,000	234,778	\$30.00/2 yrs	Non-Registered Users Only	N/A for WI registered snowmobiles \$35.00 for snowmobiles registered in another state	\$15.00
Wisconsin (AB 407)	25,000	234,778	\$30.00/2 yrs	For all users	Non-Club Member Registered Trail Pass: \$35.00 Club Member Registered Trail Pass \$15.00 Non-Registered, Non Club Member Trail Pass \$50.00 No Trail Pass required for Vintage Models	Non-Club Member: \$50.00 Club Member \$30.00 (+ ≈ \$20 club fee)
Michigan	6,400	205,808	\$30.00/3 yrs	For all users	\$45.00	\$55.00
Minnesota	21,000	253,885	\$78.50/3 yrs or \$48.50/3 years	Two options for MN registered: Trail use and non-trail use Pass required for all snowmobiles registered in another state	Registration and Trail Use have been combined into one decal as of July 1, 2012. Non-registered users \$36.00	\$26.16 or \$16.16
Iowa	8,000	28,265	\$17.75/yr	For all users	\$17.75	\$35.50
Illinois	2,500	34,000 (est)	\$30.00/3 yrs	Non-Registered Users Only	\$25.00	\$10.00
Indiana	195	10,000 (est)	\$30.00/3 yrs	No, recognizes registration from other states	n/a	\$10.00



State of Wisconsin \ DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

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November 13, 2013

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON TOURISM ASSEMBLY BILL 407

Good morning Representative Kaufert and members of the Assembly Committee on Tourism. We appreciate the opportunity to testify for information only on Assembly Bill 407.

I would like to provide you with a little background on the current situation, and how AB 407 would make modifications to the current registration system.

Current situation

- Snowmobile registration is \$30 for 2 years.
- Snowmobiles exempt from registration in Wisconsin because they are registered in another state (generally non-residents) must display a trail pass on their sleds that costs \$35.
- The Snowmobile supplemental maintenance account receives \$32 for each NR trail pass sold.
- Snowmobiles registered in Wisconsin are not required to display a trail pass.

Changes proposed by AB407 as amended

- Snowmobile registration remains unchanged at \$30 for 2 years.
- This bill requires all sleds to display a trail pass when riding Wisconsin trails.
- It provides for a free trail pass for sleds 30 years or older.
- The fee is \$15 for riders who are members of snowmobile clubs.
- A snowmobile club is defined as:
 - An association organized in Wisconsin
 - The members are also members of the Association of Wisconsin Snowmobile Clubs (AWSC)
 - It must meet at least 3 times per year
 - Have at least 10 members, and
 - Promote responsible snowmobiling.
- The fee is \$35 for non-club members per sled.
- The fee for non-residents increases to \$50 annually.
- The Snowmobile supplemental maintenance account receives \$49.25 for each NR trail pass sold due to the increase in the NR trail pass fee.
- It provides for a \$5 late fee for all trail passes issued on or after December 1 annually.

Snowmobile Account FY '06 thru FY '15

Amounts in Millions		<u>2006</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>	Estimated	
										<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>
1	<u>OPENING CASH BALANCE</u>								\$ 4.50		
2	<u>AVAILABLE BALANCE</u>									\$ 1.00	\$ 1.00
	<u>REVENUES</u>										
3	Registration Revenues (1)	\$4.50	\$3.90	\$4.50	\$4.80	\$4.40	\$4.80	\$3.40	\$4.20	\$3.70	\$3.70
4	Gas Tax for Aids	\$4.60	\$4.50	\$4.50	\$4.60	\$4.80	\$4.90	\$5.10	\$4.50	\$4.80	\$4.80
5	Stewardship Development/Maintenance Aids	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	TBD	TBD
6	Total Revenues	\$9.10	\$8.40	\$9.00	\$9.40	\$9.20	\$9.70	\$8.50	\$8.70	\$8.50	\$8.50
	<u>EXPENDITURES</u>										
	<u>Trail and Project Aids</u>										
7	Maintenance Aids	\$4.80	\$4.50	\$4.80	\$4.90	\$4.90	\$4.30	\$4.60	\$4.50	\$4.70	\$4.70
8	Supplemental Aids	\$1.90	\$2.00	\$1.00	\$2.40	\$2.10	\$2.40	\$2.20	\$1.00	\$2.50	\$2.30
9	Project Grants	<u>\$1.50</u>	<u>\$1.50</u>	<u>\$1.20</u>	<u>\$1.30</u>	<u>\$1.30</u>	<u>\$1.00</u>	<u>\$1.30</u>	<u>\$1.00</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>	TBD
10	Total Trail and Project Aids	\$8.20	\$8.00	\$7.00	\$8.60	\$8.30	\$7.70	\$8.10	\$6.50	\$7.20	\$7.00
	<u>OTHER</u>										
11	Local Law Enforcement Assistance	\$0.40	\$0.30	\$0.30	\$0.40	\$0.40	\$0.40	\$0.40	\$0.30	\$0.40	\$0.40
12	DNR Operating Expenses	<u>\$0.80</u>	<u>\$0.80</u>	<u>\$1.00</u>	<u>\$1.00</u>	<u>\$1.10</u>	<u>\$1.00</u>	<u>\$0.80</u>	<u>\$0.90</u>	<u>\$0.90</u>	<u>\$0.90</u>
13	Total Other	\$1.20	\$1.10	\$1.30	\$1.40	\$1.50	\$1.40	\$1.20	\$1.20	\$1.30	\$1.30
14	Total Expenditures	\$9.40	\$9.10	\$8.30	\$10.00	\$9.80	\$9.10	\$9.30	\$7.70	\$8.50	\$8.30
15	Annual Net Income/Loss	-\$0.30	-\$0.70	\$0.70	-\$0.60	-\$0.60	\$0.60	-\$0.80	\$1.00	\$0.00	\$0.20
16	ENDING CASH BALANCE								\$5.50		
17	<u>OUTSTANDING OBLIGATIONS</u>										
18	Outstanding Encumbrances								-\$3.50	\$0.00	\$0.00
19	Pending Grants								-\$0.60	\$0.00	\$0.00
20	Supplemental Trail Pass								-\$0.40	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>\$0.00</u>
21	AVAILABLE ENDING BALANCE								\$1.00	\$1.00	\$1.20

(1) Includes miscellaneous revenues



Association of Wisconsin Snowmobile Clubs AWSC

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ASSEMBLY BILL 407

Good morning. I am before you today to help explain the importance of the Association of Wisconsin Snowmobile Clubs and the local clubs that belong to it as well as some of the struggles that they face.

My name is Alexis Butler, I am 19 years old, and I am a member of the Sinissippi Trail Hawks Snowmobile Club in Hustisford, WI. I may be young, but I have been a part of the snowmobile community since I was a small child, as my family has always been actively involved.

This past year, I served as the Association of Wisconsin Snowmobile Clubs' Miss Snowflake. Miss Snowflake is an ambassador position within the association that travels across the state to promote safe, responsible snowmobiling while encouraging others to join a club. It was my job to educate the public about snowmobiling and the AWSC. It was my responsibility to be the main contact for public relations throughout the year. Throughout my 7,800 miles of travel across Wisconsin this year, I have learned a lot and met a lot of interesting people along the way. But more importantly, I had the opportunity to meet people from many different clubs who all expressed a common theme to me: they face a struggle to keep volunteers, and a struggle to pay for all of the maintenance costs. Some are breaking even with all of the costs associated with keeping a snowmobile trail running, but most are keeping these trails open by paying out of their own pockets.

My club has about 40 members, but only 10 of those are active in our club. Club members are all volunteers. They take on the responsibility of marking trails, grooming trails, and maintaining trails to ensure that everyone enjoys the snowmobile season. With over 200,000 snowmobiles on the trails in Wisconsin, you can see just how important clubs are. Without their dedication, without the thousands of volunteer hours, snowmobiling would not exist in Wisconsin.

In Dodge County last year, we had one of the best snow seasons that I can remember. This is significant. Not only do snowmobilers benefit from a great snow season, but so do businesses. Local businesses were shocked by how much snowmobiling can affect them. Many approached club members and exclaimed how one stretch of great snow, which brought snowmobilers visiting from across the Midwest, served to be the most profitable time their businesses had ever experienced.

At the same time, I have heard from many areas across the state that they continue to have issues with uneducated riders, making it more challenging for clubs to keep trails. Whether it be trespassing or not obeying speed zones, club members take on the responsibility of working with landowners when such unfortunate events happen to try to keep the trails safe and available. Many times we had difficulties obtaining permission from landowners due to people disobeying the laws. Most of the time, these riders are not club members. They do not understand how important it is to respect the trails they ride, what it took to acquire landowners' permission and that next year, that trail may not be there.

Clubs all across the state are searching for ways to raise funds and work together in order to cover the expensive costs of running groomers, brushing trails, placing signs, and more. For instance, Sauk County hosts one evening each spring that it dedicates to fundraising. The club members hold the event at a local venue and invite residents from the area. This is their one chance to make enough money to cover expenses within the county. They have many 50/50 raffles, large prize raffles, and cash raffles. They must have a lot of help to make sure that this event runs smoothly and guarantees some relief to the clubs.

Other clubs and counties are not even this lucky. Many do not have the manpower needed to run an event like this. Instead, they rely on smaller, dedicated crowds that go above and beyond to volunteer for their local club. In some instances, they are only able to host a local breakfast or brat fry, which is not always guaranteed to be profitable. Others host chicken barbeque dinners and feature musical entertainment to try to get more people to attend. There are many unique ideas out there that clubs are using to try to stay ahead of the bills, but sadly, many times they fall behind. Clubs continue to struggle with limited volunteers and resources to bring in income in order to fund and maintain the sport that so many people in Wisconsin love and enjoy.

It was surprising to me this year to find the number of clubs that, despite their own troubles and hardships, give back to their communities. They still understand the importance of community and charity. There was an event in Hayward that raised money for the American Heart Association in memory of Kaye Johnson. It was a vintage sled ride, and it was one of the most incredible experiences I have ever been a part of. People from across the northern part of the state came together to give back. The support was unbelievable. I also attended an event in Columbus, where the sole purpose of the event was to raise money for food pantries. Every penny that was raised at the White Elephant Auction was immediately donated to those in need. This generosity and kindness can be found in clubs all around Wisconsin.

Snowmobile clubs need help. They are the vital pieces to providing Wisconsin's trail system. 100% volunteer work ensures that over 200,000 snowmobiles hit the trails and safely enjoy the trails that they ride. Not only does this combine for the perfect family sport, but it also greatly impacts Wisconsin Tourism and the economy. Without snowmobile clubs, there would be no snowmobile trails, and therefore, no snowmobiling in Wisconsin. Assembly Bill 407 is a pivotal part in ensuring the existence of the clubs for many years to come.

Thank you for your time.

RE: Assembly Bill 407

My name is Leon Wolfe and I am the AWSC Director for Lafayette County. I am also a member of the Argyle Ditch Bangers Snowmobile Club which is a relatively new club serving the Argyle, Wisconsin area in eastern Lafayette County and part of western Green County..

Part of the Ditch Bangers' 30-plus miles of trails provides access to Yellowstone State Park from the east which is a go to place for scenic trail riding. Our trails also connect the local communities of Fayette to Argyle to Wiotra to Woodford and to South Wayne.

This club was formed just four years ago due to the need to provide local trails and winter outdoor recreation. The club has 25 to 30 members, of which at least 15 provide considerable numbers of volunteer hours securing trail locations, building trails, maintaining and signing trails.

Our main fundraiser is an 8-pin tap bowling tournament and there are gun or flat screen TV raffles going on throughout the year. The club owns an old eight track trail groomer that members maintain mechanically and operate on the trails. All bridge work and trail signage is done utilizing local materials scrounged up from farm yards or local workplaces.

This club has been bugging me to get state funding for its trail ever since I became Director. The members have applied for trail approval and as you may know, no new trail funding has been approved in many years.

Hopefully, Assembly Bill 407 would make it possible to approve new trails and create new trail experiences in Wisconsin. Lafayette County is not far from Dubuque, Iowa and Rockford, Ill. and we did have many riders from outside Wisconsin coming into our area with the early riding conditions that we had last year.

I ask for your support of Assembly Bill 407. Thank you.

Cozy Corner Trails, Inc(Snowmobile/ATV Club)

31668 Staples Lake Road

Danbury, WI 54830

Testimony of Jim Smedegard

2013 Assembly Bill 407

My name is Jim Smedegard.

I have been a member of Cozy Corner Trails, Inc., for over 35 years. Our club is located in northern Burnett and southern Douglas Counties. I am currently a Director at Large, and have served as Vice President. I am also the Burnett County representative to the Association of Wisconsin Snowmobile Clubs. My wife serves in 2 offices within our club, as well as treasurer of Burnett County Snow Trails, and secretary of the Association of Wisconsin Snowmobile Clubs. Our club is short-handed, even in filling officer positions. Our vice president recently had to close his restaurant/bar due to the economy and take a job in Williston, ND. Our trail boss recently passed away from cancer at the age of 62. This certainly adds to the burden on the rest of the officers.

Our club maintains and grooms 78 miles of funded trail, and approximately 25 miles of unfunded trails. I am one of 3 groomer operators, and also the youngest of the three at the age of 60. I spend a minimum of 15 hours per week grooming trails, and approximately 60-75 hours annually of trail clearing, signing, and brushing. I also attend a minimum of 3 club or association meetings per month, and spend significant time working with landowners and town boards of the 3 townships our trails cover.

Our club membership has gone from 65 family memberships to 30 in the past 18 years, mostly due to old age. We are in a very rural area; over half of the homes here are owned by people whose permanent residence is elsewhere, mainly the Twin Cities area. As they retire, they tend to move here and become active club members.

In order to keep our equipment updated, we have major fundraisers. Our club holds meat raffles at least monthly, we are planning our 39th annual "Booya" which brings in hundreds of people for food and raffles, for the past 12 years we have held a Prime Rib Dinner & Auction, serving over 100 people, with raffles and auctions. All of these events require a substantial amount of planning and preparation, done by 6-8 people. We also raise funds to donate to the local volunteer first responders, to help provide rescue sleds, as well as scholarships to local high schools, funds for childrens' holiday parties, funds for the local community center, cancer walks, etc.. We are available to assist in any way necessary in the event of storms or disasters in our area.

Assembly Bill 407 is precisely what we need to address these manpower issues, and decrease our financial issues. The costs keep rising for equipment, fuel, insurance, and other operating expenses. Club members do more all the time, but are aging and getting tired.

Thanks to Representative Czaja, Senator Gudex, and all that have signed on in support of AB407 and SB343. We need this to pass so that clubs can continue to provide the excellent trail system all snowmobilers enjoy for the generations yet to come.

Jim Smedegard
31668 Staples Lake Road
Danbury, WI 54830

We place jars at local businesses in an attempt to get money from non-AWSC members to help pay for our groomer and fund the trails they are riding on. It costs our club about \$300 every time we refuel one groomer and we are typically running two groomers every day we have snow. It takes us a week to groom all of our trails so the fuel costs add up quickly.

We are fortunate that one of our club members is a farmer and uses his own tractor to groom. Our last groomer we purchased is a used machine and cost the club \$75,000 which we paid off in five years. This expense limits our ability to do other projects and soon we will need to replace this groomer with another used groomer. It is not economically feasible to think about purchasing new equipment.

Our club has annual insurance costs, fuel costs, bridge rental fees with a local landowner, sign costs, building rental expenses and the cost of putting on an annual landowners appreciation day since without them, we would not exist.

Snowmobiling is an economic boost to the state through tourism. Last year we had numerous families from Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota and Illinois riding in our area and the presence of those people helped our local economy.

I understand the love of snowmobiling and the beauty of the sport. There is nothing like riding with family and friends on a crisp morning after a fresh snowfall in areas that would never be accessible if it was not for the generosity of landowners and the efforts of club members.

Last year when we had a blizzard, our county clubs were contacted by local officials to help find stranded motorists. We had two club members travel down Hwy 60 to help individuals that were stranded in their vehicles. We are a caring group and are always willing to help others when called upon. As a large group, it will always be impossible to please everyone but it was reassuring to have a unanimous vote of the AWSC Directors meeting on 11/3/13 in support of AB407 and SB343. We are now asking you as legislators to help pass AB407 which will go a long way toward keeping this sport alive for generations to come.

Thank you for your time and support.

John Brozek
W749 Oak Shore Dr.
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2013 ASSEMBLY BILL 407

My name is Gary Hilgendorf.

I am a resident of Tomahawk, located in Lincoln County. I am also a member of the Knight Owls Snowmobile Club, and in years past I have acted as trail boss, vice president, and president. I am currently a trail grooming machine operator and have been for over 40 years.

Currently I am President of the Lincoln County Snowmobile Counsel, and an AWSC Representative for Lincoln County.

Our club had overseen the development and maintenance of 90 miles of trails, though only 48 of those miles are included in the funded trail system. In addition, our club recently took over 40 more miles of trails that were once maintained by the County, but because it was not cost-effective for the County to continue it made the decision to end its involvement in this stretch of trail. In total, we are responsible for 130 miles of trails.

I imagine the County could not handle the financial burden of supplying manpower, fuel and other expenses, nor did it see the benefit of providing and maintaining expensive grooming machines.

We were already stretched to the limit with respect to our original 90 miles of trails. Money is tight, the number of volunteers working on the trails was already low, but we made the decision to also accept the additional 40 miles because that is a vital link in our local system and all snowmobilers, including non-club members would suffer from its absence. Businesses that rely on our local trails would also suffer.

We spend an average of \$41,000.00 each season on our local trails. 88 miles x the reimbursement rate of \$250 per mile = \$22,000, leaving the club to make up the deficit each year even though ALL snowmobilers enjoy our trails. We are in constant fundraising mode. In 2013 alone, we've conducted 15 events to help us come close to covering our shortfalls.

Currently two of the 7 clubs in Lincoln County are very close to disbanding due to lack of enough funding and lack of members. If those or any other clubs go under it would cause a serious break in our system, affecting state corridors.

In closing, when you hear snowmobilers state that without snowmobile clubs there wouldn't be any trails for our state, realize that it would be nearly impossible for state or local government to undertake the time and expense of providing trails. Know that people like me and my fellow club members love our sport and love what we do in providing trails for our families, our communities and even for those snowmobilers who don't belong to clubs or contribute their time or money. However, my fellow club members have been stretched to the breaking point.

Assembly Bill 407 is exactly what we need to address our manpower and financial struggles. I thank Representative Czaja and Senator Gudex for recognizing the crisis and introducing legislation to address it, and I thank you for your consideration.

November 13, 2013

Good Morning,

I want to thank the committee for making this hearing available for many of us snowmobilers who have input to provide on AB407, and also to thank those legislators who have had a part in writing up and presenting, once again, AWSC's Cap/Step bill.

Because Cap/Step is so complicated and would be a nightmare to administer, there is no way possible for me to cover all of what I would like to say in the time allowed, so I will hit a couple of high points and have written up some other documentation to support my position that for the third time now, Cap/Step needs to go away. I have provided each of you with this document.

My name is Richard Steimel and I bring to this table 48 years of snowmobiling experience that includes involvement in just about everything possible with Wisconsin's snowmobile program, laying out and building trails, maintaining and grooming trails, meeting with landowners, attending past hearings here at the Capitol, club, county, and state level meetings, and playing a very active role in holding positions in numerous snowmobile organizations. Included in this list is my past role as a member of the Wisconsin Snowmobile Recreation Council for five 3-year terms. Also included is about 35 years of membership in the AWSC, which I was mostly proud to be a member of, but this all changed when Cap/Step appeared on AWSC's Radar screen about 10-15 years ago as their one and only focus: Get more money and volunteers for the program.

The two primary points that I want to make now are 1) It is wrong to switch our present registration process to one that has two fees, based on who you are and whether or not you belong to a snowmobile club, and 2) There is absolutely no guarantee whatsoever that Cap/Step will bring more volunteers into active roles in our program.

Regarding the **two-fee system**, snowmobile trails exist in a public venue, trails are open to the public, and it is just plain and simply wrong to base registration fees on whether or not you belong to AWSC, a private snowmobile organization. By some observations, it is quite possibly illegal to make this requirement. Yes, a person would still have a choice to join or not, and yes, the trails although open to the public, are mostly on private land, and allowed by our gracious landowners, but being forced to join a club or to pay a penalty for daring not to join is NOT the Wisconsin way of doing things, and if it should become allowed by passage of Cap/Step, the results will haunt us forever, and it will haunt our legislators also who will be asked to do the same for other private organizations in Wisconsin.

Many what-ifs are being tossed around by club members and non-club members regarding **more volunteers coming forward** to help the clubs. Our volunteers are already out there and helping out, and as older people like myself start to drop back in doing what they have done for years, there is a continually changing membership in the clubs and the trails are still going in and our now third generation of snowmobiles ARE coming forward, without Cap/Step, and helping out because snowmobilers want a place to ride. It is interesting to hear and consider that a strong possibility would exist that maybe clubs would actually loose members if Cap/Step passes since some snowmobilers might now feel that by paying the extra \$20 for NOT being a member, that would compensate for their decision, and now they wouldn't have to join up and help with club fundraisers, pounding in stakes, etc.

Having accumulated 95,557 miles of snowmobiling since 1965, I am hoping to pass the 100,000 mile mark this winter, but more importantly I am hoping to see the accomplishment of what needs to get done to improve our program—increase the registration fee and bury Cap/Step once and for all. Please look over my supplemental document or contact me for further information. I will gladly answer any questions that I might know the answers to at this time if you have any. Thank you.



Concerns, Issues & Unanswered Questions

Please read these 50+ questions if you are interested in knowing how complicated and complex Cap/Step really is.

1. Our present registration process is quick and simple, why would we want to change this?
2. Presently registration can be completed when a snowmobile is bought from a dealer, how will that be possible with Cap/Step, which requires one of two fees depending on club membership?
3. Registration renewal can also be done very easily and quickly on-line, then carry a copy of the renewal until your card arrives in the mail, how will this be possible with Cap/Step?
4. What if a snowmobiler "joins" a club while completing the paperwork at a dealership, how could this possibly be done so that he can go ride after leaving with his new sled?
5. Seems like a lot more work for the dealership who used to be able to sell a sled to someone who could actually ride away on his new/used sled. What about this, and how and by whom will the dealership be compensated?
6. Now let's imagine that my sled finally gives out and I go to the dealership to buy a new one in about the middle of January. Under Cap/Step, I will have to pay a \$5 surcharge (penalty) for not buying my trail pass prior to December 1st. When does the very complex and complicated Cap/Step effects stop?
7. Somewhere in the bill there was mention of free trail passes to certain people (armed services, vintage snowmobiles, safety instructors)...did that go away or not, and who made that decision?
8. And if it did disappear through an amendment or something, how many more amendments are going to further complicate things before Cap/Step moves forward?
9. Many snowmobile registrations show different names at a given address (husband, wife, etc.). Has there been any thought of how to treat sleds under different names at a single address when it comes to verifying club membership, and what if a person has single membership because his wife doesn't ride too much, maybe only 10 miles a year on her sled? Will she now need to pay the \$20 penalty, or will the husband say that he really owns both sleds even though one is in his wife's name?
10. Regarding club membership, isn't it true that not all membership fees are the same? So why would a snowmobiler even want to join a club for \$25 if he could simply pay the \$20 non-member penalty and forget about having to volunteer?
11. Most club members do nothing for/within the club except pay their dues. Yet that member can register ALL of his sleds with \$15 trail passes but the person who is not a member but likely still buys raffle tickets and donates to groomer jugs must pay the \$20 surcharge on EACH of his sleds. Isn't this unfair?

12. Who will sell trail passes (clubs, AWSC, and/or DNR)? Sounds like the AWSC will be a statutory part of Wisconsin snowmobile laws if Cap/Step passes. Won't this require bonding if they are collecting money for the state?
13. And won't all club treasurers also have to be bonded?
14. Won't there be numerous opportunities for fraud and corruption with Cap/Step because of who will be collecting state money and (hopefully) turning it over to the state, and how will this be done and audited?
15. Open records for state matters show that AWSC was in bad standing with the state for over five years back in the 1990's. What did they do that was so wrong to earn them this blemish that will never go away and to take five years to fix?
16. With Cap/Step, AWSC becomes a sort of "partner" in the snowmobile program, spelled out specifically in AB407/SB343. Won't there be some type of liability on the State of Wisconsin that could present a nightmare if this private organization does something wrong?
17. And given the previous "bad standing" status, doesn't it seem to be some type of red flag for legislators if they decided to support Cap/Step?
18. What happens if AWSC disappears and a new statewide organization takes its place?
19. For each AWSC membership, \$10 goes to the AWSC to use as they please, and no money ever goes back to the clubs from AWSC, but if a non-member pays the \$20 penalty, all of that goes into the snowmobile program, and the snowmobile program is where the funding comes from that goes back to the clubs after their paperwork is submitted in the spring. So isn't a non-member actually putting more money into the fund to go back to the clubs if he decides NOT to join AWSC?
20. AWSC likes to point out that non-club members don't contribute to the snowmobile program. Aren't they forgetting that currently every time a snowmobile owner registers his snowmobile, this generates about \$75 that goes directly into the snowmobile program for return to the clubs as a result of the registration fee, gas tax transfer, and the 1.4% multiplier (now slightly more)?
21. In summary, AWSC is a private organization that meets behind closed doors and answers to no one other than its membership and directors. Cap/Step is purely a membership drive bill to give them more money. Has AWSC forgotten that our legislators have better things to do than run a membership drive bill for a private organization?
22. Many snowmobilers believe more of their money goes to the clubs when they pay the \$20+ membership fee, then what goes into the snowmobile program. Isn't it true, though, that the trails/clubs actually receive more money back from the program if the \$20 that a non-member would be paying doesn't get reduced right away by \$10 going to AWSC such as is happening when that person joins a club?
23. Given the many different club's membership dues (About \$10 to about \$50, active member or non-active membership structure, other variances), it would be much less complicated for someone to just forget club membership and pay the \$20 surcharge. This would benefit the program funding level, but wouldn't help AWSC gain new members. So which is the main priority with AB407 anyway?
24. Cap/Step imposes a two-tier registration fee structure based on membership in a private snowmobile club. Why has it never been stated by a court, or lawyers, that Cap/Step would be legal or illegal?

25. Is the two-tier structure something that would very likely be challenged in court by someone based on the above observation?
26. And would it then be possible that some judge would put a hold on Cap/Step until a higher court rules on this?
27. And couldn't this tie up everything for years resulting in once again no new funding in the snowmobile program and costing AWSC thousands?
28. According to open records, AWSC has spent \$31,720.00 on lobbying costs for the time period of January-June, 2013. How much has AWSC spent totally on Cap/Step going back to its beginning, and having had bill numbers and moved into the Capitol twice already in the past, and failed?
29. And how many AWSC members know this?
30. AB407 has a two-year registration cost, and one-year trail fee cost, and won't that further complicate the total registration/trail pass process when it comes to administration?
31. It is often stated by AWSC that two-tier works in New York, yet it is common knowledge that snowmobilers who have tried to verify this are NOT hearing this from everyone, specifically one source stated "...I did send e-mails to several clubs in New York and every response said they had no new volunteers after the New York program went into effect, and most of them had nothing good to say about the program..." What is really happening in New York?
32. As of a recent internet search, for 2012-13 New York has about 100,000 fewer registered snowmobiles than Wisconsin, about 10,500 miles of trail, no trail pass requirement, \$100 registration fee (club members pay \$55.00 less), and 260 snowmobile clubs (also has required helmet law and 55 mph speed limit—day/night). In addition, New York's trail funding structure is completely different than Wisconsin's in several different ways. In summary then, the snowmobile program funding in New York is very much different than Wisconsin's. Why would we even begin to think that if it worked in New York (which is questionable) it would work here?
33. Why did AWSC NOT have Cap/Step legislation information at their snowshoe booth in October in Milwaukee to pass out to the thousand or so non-club members who attended the three-day event?
34. Isn't it true that AWSC's narrow tunnel vision focus on Cap/Step for about ten years now is the real reason why there has been no attempts to gain additional funding through a simple overdue registration increase?
35. How many clubs and club members even know this?
36. And how many club members have been told that there IS an alternate for increased funding that was proposed and passed for support during the December snowmobile recreation council meeting in Hurley?
37. Isn't it true that this SRC alternate for an increase in funding even included a trail pass, and that no new stickers would have been required?
38. If Cap/Step were to pass, would this mean a trail pass sticker would have to be purchased every year, and would the trail passes be different for members than for non-members?

39. Is there any history in Wisconsin for a program similar to Cap/Step--two different state fees to pay depending on membership in a private organization?
40. Why do we now hear that even some who were originally opposed to Cap/Step are saying that a meaningful funding increase is so long overdue that we need to support and pass it since there is nothing else out there?
41. Does it make sense to use this as a crutch to pass something that has obvious concerns and red flags rather than fix it or now before it becomes law?
42. Aren't lots of the Cap/Step supporters now also saying that we need to get something going, and then it can be fine tuned and repaired if necessary once it becomes law? How smart is this?
43. There seems to be total confusion on exactly how much trail passes and registration costs will be, given the numerous unknowns and the changes that we keep hearing about, some being shown on the amendment to the bill. What are the correct amounts?
44. Many people have stated that the entire Cap/Step process seems to be way too complicated, and this certainly seems to be a true statement. Everything would be so much simpler if Wisconsin would just raise the registration instead, as many legislators have said. Why do we have to wait for Cap/Step to again fail when we already have been told by one of the bill's authors that she/he is ready to introduce a simple registration increase?
45. Isn't it true that a simple registration increase of about \$10-\$15 per year per snowmobile for everyone would give us the needed funding?
46. What ever happened to "United we trail, Divided we fail?"
47. Many snowmobilers have stated outright that we need to keep our program voluntary. Then why are we being told that it is no longer OK to keep our program running like it presently is which has been working for over 40 years?
48. While AWSC only represents about 25,000-30,000 snowmobile owners, according to their membership numbers, we should be hearing more from the non-club members who far outnumber the club members. But we do not, most likely because AWSC has not attempted to reach them. Why is this?
49. The fiscal report for Cap/Step is showing no significant increase to administer the Cap/Step proposal, most likely because its effective date is in 2015. Why have we not seen what the real cost will be post July 2015, when we know full well that there will have to be added personnel and administrative costs (DNR, AWSC, and the clubs and county organizations)?
50. Missing from additional input regarding Cap/Step is how the businesses are feeling towards passage of this bill. Since tourism is such a huge part of snowmobiling, have the businesses that would be affected even been told about Cap/Step?
51. There has also been very little attention paid to a very simple and glaring effect if Cap/Step passes. Landowners will be told that they will have to pay more to register and ride their snowmobiles across their own land if they do not belong to a club. Are there going to be huge gaps in our present trail system when those landowners respond to this?
52. Are there already some landowners who have already told their local clubs that their land will no longer be a part of the trail system if this happens?

53. Why do some clubs and club members refuse to believe that there really are lots of snowmobilers out there that will refuse or simply cannot join a club, and that their own reasons for taking this stand need to be taken seriously and respected?
54. Has the snowmobile program grown beyond what has been a proud standing for so long—"We snowmobilers are a dedicated group of volunteers and we are self-funded and are not afraid to pay our own way, even if it means raising our own registration costs?" (This is an AWSC quote.)
55. Might we see some new T-shirts or stickers on some snowmobiles if Cap/Step passes: "Not a club member and proud of it" or "I paid my penalty, now quit hounding me to join a club"?
56. Lots of postings on different forums and input during club meetings are begging for an answer to "Why can't we just raise the registration and keep it simple and equal for everyone?"
57. Good question. Let's hope our legislators take this seriously and not cave into the smooth talking input from AWSC who is pretty much guaranteed to be the only winner (\$10 per new member richer) if Cap/Step passes.



Michigan

Proximity to the Great Lakes means abundant amounts of lake effect snow all over the Great Lake State. Annual accumulations can exceed 14-feet on the Keweenaw Peninsula and 10-feet in western parts of lower Michigan.

Records include 355 inches in a season at Houghton and a staggering 129.5 inches in one day at Copper Harbor, and both in the western Upper Peninsula. This heavy snow fall means great riding all season long, from trail opening on December 1st until closing on March 31st. And snowmobile registrations from other states are honored in Michigan, so all you need is a modestly-priced trail pass that's available online or from literally hundreds of merchants across the state.

Maintenance of roughly 6,100 miles of interconnecting snowmobile trails is handled by more than 100 grooming tractors operated by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and local snowmobile clubs. Outstanding infrastructure support includes easily accessible lodging, restaurants, gas stations, dealerships and repair shops, souvenir shopping

and other services. And trail links to Wisconsin and Ontario open up thousands of miles of additional riding possibilities.

The heavily forested Upper Peninsula is a favorite destination of riders from across the country. It offers woods trails, fire roads, rail lines, ice running on famous Lake Gogebic, and numerous natural attractions like the Lake of the Clouds scenic overlook near Silver City and other great views of the Great Lakes.

The famed Firesteel bridges on the Bill Nichols Trail provide a unique experience by taking snowmobilers literally through the treetops. Easily accessible Tahquamenon Falls is American's second highest waterfall east of the Mississippi. And the Top of the Lake Snowmobile Museum in Naubinway features a large collection of interesting and rare old snow machines and memorabilia plus a well-stocked gift shop. Their 20th anniversary winter event will take place on February 17-18, 2012, and will feature Polar snowmobiles, the ancestor of Arctic Cat.

The lower peninsula of Michigan also offers excellent riding on well-maintained trails through a variety of settings ranging from woodlands to shorelines. It's also a hotbed of snowmobile racing.

When you add it all up, Michigan has it all for snowmobilers. So what are you waiting for? Plan a Michigan snowmobile vacation this winter.

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- Top of the Lake Snowmobile Museum
www.snowmobilemuseum.com or (906) 477-6298

SNOWMOBILE COUNTRY

MICHIGAN, MINNESOTA & WISCONSIN *By Mike Carr*

To say that snowmobiling is popular in the Upper Midwest would be an understatement. Ever since the sport took off in the late 1960s as an exhilarating cure for cabin fever, the states of Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin have been at the forefront. Today, each of these three states all boast well more than 200,000 registered snowmobiles (New York is a distant 4th, with about half as many), as well as interconnected trail systems that are remarkable in their extent and excellence.

Snowmobiling has deep roots in this part of the country, where the idea of motorized winter travel captured the imagination of forward-thinking innovators. The Eliason Motor Toboggan of the 1920s had its genesis in Sayner, Wisconsin (where early models can be seen today at the Eliason family hardware store), while both Polaris and Arctic Cat trace their legendary history back to the 1960s in remote northwestern Minnesota. Dozens of other factories formed in the states over the years, but 50 years later, the factories in

Roseau and Thief River Falls are still churning out snowmobiles and other recreational products as significant contributors to the economic vitality of Minnesota, while Yamaha maintains U.S. headquarters for its snowmobile division in neighboring Wisconsin. Even the innovative Blade snowmobile, first developed in the late 1990s and produced for more than a decade thereafter, had its beginning in Eveleth, Minnesota.

The excellence of snowmobiling in these states is directly attributable to the efforts of snowmobile clubs. When this new sport boomed in popularity, clubs formed to counter the problems caused by hordes of riders operating without regulation or designated places to ride. With the permission of landowners and local business support, clubs established interconnecting trail networks and worked together to mark, maintain and groom them. Those systems have expanded over the decades, especially with the addition of routes on abandoned railroad grades — which snow-

mobile clubs pursued with a passion. Today, there are more than 950 clubs across the three states and strong, pro-active state associations promoting safe and responsible riding on vast systems of marked and groomed trails.

This region is usually blessed with plenty of snow, not only from the typical systems that move eastward across the continent, but by three other phenomena as well. "Alberta clippers" are fast-moving Canadian systems that bring several inches of light, fluffy snow. Most impressive are the "panhandle hook" storms that draw moisture from the Gulf of Mexico, then deposit heavy snowfalls as they move northeast, often across southern Wisconsin and lower Michigan. Last but not least are the impressive lake-effect snows that occur on Lake Superior's southern shore and Lake Michigan's eastern coast when prevailing winds bring airborne moisture ashore.

Here's a closer look at each state in the traditional heart of snowmobile country.



THE BIG 3 BY THE NUMBERS

	Michigan	Minnesota	Wisconsin
2011 Registrations / Trail Permits	243,000 / 176,720*	251,770 / 222,800*	236,500 / 35,000 35,000 non-resident permits
Registration Fee	\$30 for 3 years	\$48.50 for 3 years	\$30 for 2 years
Annual Trail Permit	\$45	\$16 or \$31 for 3 years	\$35 for non-residents
Historic Sled Registration	\$50 (26+ year old sleds)	\$9.50 (25+ year old sleds)	\$20 (1966 and older sleds)
Trail Miles Statewide	6,500	22,000	25,000
State Association	Michigan Snowmobile Association (MSA)	Minnesota United Snowmobilers Association (MnUSA)	Association of Wisconsin Snowmobile Clubs (AWSC)
Snowmobile Clubs Statewide 2011	108	250	600
Association Membership 2011	13,500	12,000 families	27,000 families
State Association Annual Dues	\$20 per family	\$20 per family	\$10 per family when part of club membership

*All trail riders in Michigan and Minnesota must purchase a trail permit regardless of residency. In Wisconsin, trail permits are sold to non-residents only.

Michael Holden
706 Western Ave.
Sheboygan Falls, WI 53085

My name is Mike Holden and I am a charter member of the Sheboygan Falls Snowmobile Association. I am proud to be a charter member of this snowmobile club, which my father help found back in 1971. Since then I have been extremely involved in marking 8 mile of trails, grooming 35 miles of trails, teaching an annual snowmobile safety class, and helping with numerous fund raisers. In its early years my club had over 110 members, we currently have only 50. This week-end I will be celebrating my 69th birthday. While I am not ready to retire from the things I do, it would be great to step back a bit. Unfortunately there aren't many younger members willing to step forward to help. Many of our members are older. Small clubs like mine, continue to struggle with paying for the high costs of trail and groomer maintenance. In our area where snow can be limited, it is costly to keep our 1990 Tucker running. We need help.

I am also the President of the Northern Kettle Moraine Snowmobile Association, which is the association that represents the 15 clubs in Sheboygan County. Several of these clubs are in the same position as my home club; their membership is aging and they are having a hard time finding volunteers to help with trails, grooming & fund raising.

In April of this year, my wife and I, along with three of the Association of Wisconsin Snowmobile Clubs youth were invited to attend the New York State Snowmobile Association Forum at Lake Placid. We were there to do a presentation on the Wisconsin youth program (KAOS – Kids and Adults On Sleds) which is a youth leadership training program. While attending this Forum, I had the opportunity to meet with New York president, Gary Boderick (who is here to testify) as well as several other association members and asked many questions about their registration program, which is similar to what we are asking you to approve. The main questions were: Did your program work, did it do what you wanted, did it help your volunteer shortage, and would you do it again?

I learned that yes they would pursue this registration program again. It DID bring more money into the program for trails. Their club membership increased dramatically. With an increase in membership, their volunteer base also increased significantly. My conclusion, their program worked for them it can also work here in Wisconsin.

Please vote to recommend passage of AB407 to the full Assembly, and vote to pass it once it gets to the floor of the Assembly.

Thank you

ASSEMBLY BILL 407

My name is Mike Giese and I am a Member of the Wolff's Pack S.C. of Neenah. I serve as the Clubs Trail Chairman. I am also the Winnebago Co. Snowmobile Alliance Director.

Our Club has approximately 25 members with four primary members that do the lion's share of the work, averaging 100 to 200+ hours of donated labor per person annually. We are responsible for 18 miles of the funded corridor 28 trail.

Our club struggles financially and in order to make ends meet we get involved in several fundraisers throughout the year. We sell brats, roast corn, sell raffle tickets and still had to rely on no-interest loans from club members to manage our annual trail maintenance expenditures. Many of the things that we do to keep costs down is to rely on relationships within our community that allow us usage of their heavy equipment. I personally store the groomer, drag and other equipment at my property free of charge.

In 2012, our club purchased a 1989 grooming unit and used club labor to refurbish the unit. Without the special skill sets of our dedicated members, we could have never afforded to stay in operation.

We do all of these activities to help bring snowmobile trails to our friends, our families and to the general public. Our financial burdens continue to increase on an annual basis and I am not sure how much longer we can sustain these financial and physical activities without burning out the existing members of our club.

There have been other clubs in our area that have succumbed to these burdens and are no longer active. With each club that fails, neighboring clubs must take on even more responsibility. I fear that without change our club along with many other clubs throughout the state will not be able to survive.

I am proud of our 40+ year heritage of bringing trails to the public and fear that this legacy is in jeopardy and won't be able to continue into the future. The cooperation of our very gracious landowners across the state is critical to the success of Wisconsin's great snowmobile trail network. Failures of clubs will result in the closure of trails and any lapse in landowner access would be very difficult to regain in the future.

I believe Clubs like ours are vital to the trail system that brings in Millions or even more than one Billion tourism dollars annually.

In closing I ask this committee to pass this legislation and to urge your fellow legislators to help a snowmobile community in crisis.

Thank You for this opportunity to testify.

ASSEMBLY BILL 407

My name is Dave Newman, and I reside in Unity, WI located in Clack County.

I am the Vice President of the Association of Wisconsin Snowmobile Clubs (AWSC) and on behalf of the AWSC's 23,000 members, I would like to thank Chairman Kaufert for holding today's hearing on AB 407, along with Rep. Czaja for authoring this measure and Sen. Gudex for sponsoring its Senate companion. I also want to thank Representatives Ballweg and Danou for their past efforts.

Within the AWSC, I also serve as the chair of the AWSC's Environmental Committee, which monitors land access issues both in Wisconsin and across the country. When issues come up that affect snowmobile access we notify our membership and let them know how to comment to the agency involved.

I have also taken on the role of educating snowmobile clubs on what they need to do to be in compliance with tax and legal obligations.

I am also a member of the Governor's Snowmobile Recreation Council. It is my understanding that Dale Mayo, also a Snowmobile Recreation Council member will be addressing you about the financial needs of the snowmobile program.

Here are just a couple of examples of what the AWSC does for snowmobiling: For the past 44 years the AWSC has been representing snowmobiling and the nearly 600 snowmobile clubs in Wisconsin. We have been the watchdog of the snowmobile program and we monitor all legislation or rules that could have an effect on snowmobiling in Wisconsin. We have legal representation that we call upon anytime a club might have legal issues and needs assistance. We also publish a monthly magazine

that allows us to communicate with each individual member and educate them on what goes into making the statewide trail system and safety-related issues. Last year we worked with Discover Wisconsin to produce one of their shows about the importance of club membership and what the clubs do to make snowmobiling what it is in Wisconsin. Every year the AWSC holds its Fall Workshop where hundreds of snowmobile club members get together for a weekend and are presented with information and instruction on a wide variety of topics that they can take back to their local clubs.

We conduct workshops that provide instruction on marking trails, grooming trails, understanding and complying with the state funded program including grant applications and contracting with counties. Workshops also cover safety education, training safety instructors, complying with new regulations, acquiring proper and necessary insurance, publicity and public relations, membership drives, promoting fundraisers, and teaching clubs to comply with tax regulations as most clubs are considered not-for-profit entities.

For your information, the AWSC is also a 501(c)3, not-for-profit organization that charges \$10 annual dues per member which is what it costs to service and administer each membership.

Across the state, clubs charge their own membership fees which our research shows cost on average \$20 per year. Some snowmobilers belong to multiple clubs. These club dues are used for club activities but for the most part are used to supplement the costs of trail maintenance.

Our Wisconsin snowmobile clubs are being stretched to their limits when it comes to funding and their volunteer workforce. The government cannot provide these trails, and without club members volunteering their time, the 25,000 miles of snowmobile trails would not exist. It is time to fix the problems and we cannot afford to wait any longer for the legislature to act. The AWSC clubs realize this and our Directors, representing each of the 72 counties, voted unanimously to support this bill at our November 3rd meeting.

I know you will be hearing from other club members about their financial and manpower needs. But I would like to take a minute to tell you about my small club of 25 families. Before the season begins, we have to acquire permission from the 44 landowners that own the land our 23 miles of trail crosses. In the fall 5 or 6 of us will spend 70 – 80 hours signing and brushing the trails to make them safe and accessible. Then in the spring we need to go back out and remove the signs before the farmers start to work their land.

We not only donate our time, we also donate the use of our pickup trucks, ATVs, chain saws and other equipment and the gas that is used in them. Depending on the amount of snowfall during the season, I and one other member will volunteer up to 100 hours, grooming the trails so that they can be enjoyed by all snowmobilers. Though we have been saving up to purchase a used groomer for several years, we are currently just leasing an ag tractor to pull our drag. Many of our club's members that do not help work on the trails, do help sell raffle tickets and work at our pancake breakfast and vintage show to raise additional funds.

The revenue that comes from snowmobile registrations and gas tax from those sleds goes in to a fund that is paid back to the clubs through their county for work done on funded trails. The amount of funds available is often not enough to cover the increasing cost of equipment and fuel.

The CAP/STEP initiative is modeled after successful programs that have been in place for several years in New Hampshire and New York. Today we have with us, the past president of New York State Snowmobile Association to talk to you about the successes they have experienced in their state. I want to thank Gary for taking the time to travel all the way here from New York.



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**Testimony Prepared for Wisconsin Legislature Sub-Committee Meeting on Two-Tier
Legislation**

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Snowmobiling in the United States and Canada has a \$9 Billion Dollar Economic Impact annually. The vast majority of that impact is facilitated by Snowmobile Clubs, Building, maintaining and grooming snowmobile trails. The vast majority of these trails only exist because of the clubs throughout the continent, the nation and the state of Wisconsin-and these clubs are manned by volunteers-those individuals who love the sport of snowmobiling enough to take time out of their lives to ensure a great experience for everyone that rides.

So, what is a club? It's a volunteer organization that serves the needs of the community by planning, setting up, building and maintaining trails for use by the community. These clubs are open, non-exclusive entities that are always willing to accept new members. Generally, they are Not-For-Profit organizations.

In 2006, New York State, at the urging of the New York State Snowmobile Association (NYSSA), adopted the Snowmobilers Rights and Responsibilities Act, otherwise known as SRRRA, which adopted the 'Two-Tier' Registration system. We developed this system based on legislation originally implemented successfully in New Hampshire.

The reasons the New York State Snowmobile Association pursued this legislation:

First, this is an issue of fairness. It's not fair to have a small percentage of snowmobilers build and maintain-and to a large degree, fund a trail system for the majority without some type of contribution on their part. Clubs need money to make safe trails possible. This includes the purchase of signage to advise riders of hazards, road crossings, and the like, stakes to place the signs on, equipment to pound those stakes, equipment to get the stakes to where they need to be pounded, saws and other tools to clear brush, deadfalls and overhanging limbs that cause a safety concern. That's just to get the trails ready in a normal year. Add to that, years when there are natural disasters, like floods that destroy trails and bridges that clubs build for snowmobilers and grooming equipment to safely traverse bodies of water. All these things cost money-money that is in short supply, even with trail funding. Add to that, the cost of Trail Grooming Equipment that can cost up to \$300K new-and operates at approx. 5

While we see this program as a success, many thought it would never succeed. We addressed many corollary issues such as:

- A minimum dues standard for clubs to make a level playing field for everyone.
- Building an automated Membership system so people could join a club at any time and receive 'proof of membership' so as not to hinder their ability to register and ride 'at the last minute'.
- Encouraging Membership 'where you ride'
- Encouraging members to join multiple clubs as membership money gets to the clubs far faster than Grant money received from the Trail Fund.
- A constant educational process from the NYSSA to members through online and print publications and to non-members through information added to state registration mailings, press releases, dealerships and maintaining a presence at snowmobile related events.
- Defining what a Snowmobile Club is -a Trail Maintenance Entity (TME) to ensure no clubs were formed solely to make money off the SRRA Bill.

One of the major benefits of this legislation: It gives us an avenue to communicate with the vast majority of snowmobilers riding in the state. Prior to this legislation we had approximately 26K member families in clubs in New York State. Statewide Snowmobile Registration numbers were above 170K registered-but we had no way to contact the 'nonmember' riders to inform them of safety concerns, provide familiarization on laws governing snowmobiling, riding protocol, private and public landowner concerns or to introduce them to the clubs that make their riding possible.

There seems to regularly be 10-15% of registrants in the state that have not joined a club. Though we have no studies to tell us why these people don't join a club, based on discussions with some of our Department of Motor Vehicle personnel, there seems to be a lack of understanding of club requirements for members, they don't feel they have time for the club or they don't mind paying a higher registration as they understand the costs are far higher in the areas surrounding New York State.

While this legislation has had little effect on the State Trail Fund, it has helped the clubs to increase in membership from three to five fold. My local club in Niagara County, New York went from approx. 200 members per year to a peak of 984 member families in the 2010-11 season, enabling the club to purchase much needed 'state of the art' grooming equipment to replace equipment that was manufactured before many of our members were born and spent more time being repaired than actually grooming trails. It also enabled us to purchase property with a building that is used as a groomer maintenance and storage facility, with immediate access to our trail system. This allows us to work on these units in a heated building out of the elements-enabling us to repair units faster and more completely, raising the 'in-service' hours of each piece of equipment.

We faced some resistance to this legislation from within and from without. Some thought the legislation would fail; some felt that it would kill snowmobiling in New York State. It did not. In fact, we see it as the SRRA bill has actually strengthened the snowmobiling program in the state. Every club has had to adapt to the influx of members, we have seen some new clubs have forming in areas that have incomplete trail coverage to better 'connect' the state corridor trail system. We have many more active people and clubs. We have people that are vastly more informed on snowmobiling related issues, especially when it comes to the desires of the landowners our trails are laid out on. We continue to find motivating volunteers to be a challenge at the club level, though each and every club has a much larger pool of people to mine from.

MPH (Note-there are over 25,000 miles of snowmobile trails in Wisconsin) and get approximately 3-5 Miles to the gallon of Fuel or more.

How do the clubs operate, build and maintain trails? Outside of grant money, they use every means available-from the selling of advertisements for their newsletters and on their grooming equipment, to donations of parts and fuel and dollars from the wonderful businesses that support them to fundraisers ranging from prize giveaways to chicken barbecues. All these methods for gathering funds-all of these events and activities are operated by volunteers. Based on an Economic Impact Study conducted by the State University of New York at Potsdam, on behalf of NYSSA, our volunteer force is aging. The only other source of funds is from membership dollars.

As a state association, NYSSA believed it was answerable to clubs, and it was the clubs that needed funds and volunteers to keep trails. Though representing snowmobilers is an important concept, as long as snowmobilers were depleting clubs of funds and energy while not contributing funds and/or volunteer time to the clubs, left the clubs unfairly 'holding the bag' for the entire sport. Without the clubs there would be no trail system, only renegade riders and illegal trails would result.

We saw that the best way to address all these needs was to provide an 'across the board' incentive for snowmobile riders to join clubs. Our annual registration cost was \$45 per Snowmobile. New York does not charge a separate 'Trail Pass' fee. Of that \$45, \$10 was used by the state to cover administrative costs for processing registrations through the Department of Motor Vehicles; the other \$35 is used to populate the State Snowmobile Trail Development and Maintenance Fund (which is returned through channels to the clubs that maintain trails).

The legislation increased snowmobile registration to \$100 per snowmobile annually, though if one joins a Snowmobile Club recognized by the New York State Snowmobile Association, the registration is discounted to \$45. This is based on the Snowmobile Owner (or Family Member, dependent on type of membership); The discount applies to every snowmobile registered by that club member. Regardless of whether one registers as a member or a non-member, New York State keeps \$10 of each registration and the balance is placed into the Snowmobile Trail Development and Maintenance Fund.

Based on the recollections of many, the largest 'roadblock' was that Government believed that NYSSA simply could not ensure everyone that wanted to join a club could and get proof of membership in a timely manner. From the individual snowmobiler? The greatest concern was simply a fear of change.

The following are the membership numbers based on each year:

YEAR	MEMBER COUNT	MEMBER REGISTRATIONS	NON-MEMBER REGISTRATIONS
2007-8	66000	104,562	19,435
2008-9	69700	116,439	19,829
2009-10	70050	109,599 ²	15,165
2010-11	69205	118,688	15,909
2011-12 ¹	54053	80,850	9,583
2012-13	61074	103,013	13,712

1 – Season with little to no snow across the state.

2 – Economic downturn

Our numbers of members and member registrations had increased steadily until the 2011-12 season when we had virtually no snow, last year showed some recovery.

Out of our entire Legislature-the Assembly, Senate and Governor's office, we received only one 'Nay' vote-from a legislator somewhere in New York City-not exactly a hub of snowmobiling nor of snowmobilers! We did spend a lot of time talking to all levels of our state government and educating them about how snowmobiling works in the state-it works because of the Clubs.

Our winning strategy in New York? The rank and file snowmobiler was generally not opposed to joining a snowmobile club, but was unsure how to do it. We all worked together-from our Member Clubs, state organization, local government, state level government, the Department of Motor Vehicles, local County Clerks, and our Lobbyists to spread the word and inform every snowmobiler in the state on the coming changes. We were able to use the snowmobile registration renewal packages to include information on the benefits of joining a club and how to accomplish that.

On behalf of the New York State Snowmobile Association, the largest Member Driven Snowmobile Association in North America, in fact, in the world, we encourage you to support the Association of Wisconsin Snowmobile Clubs in this legislation. We understand that upon implementation of this legislation, we will immediately become the second largest snowmobile association in the world and have no regrets-It will be good for your state, good for the clubs, good for snowmobiling and good for the individual Snowmobilers throughout the great state of Wisconsin.