



PATRICK TESTIN

STATE SENATOR

DATE: March 15th, 2017
RE: **Testimony on 2017 AB 82 and SB 46**
TO: The Assembly Committee on Natural Resources and Sporting Heritage
FROM: Senator Patrick Testin

Chairman Kleefisch and members of the committee, thank you for accepting my written testimony on behalf of Assembly Bill 82 and Senate Bill 46. This legislation demonstrates respect for Purple Heart recipients and disabled veterans by ensuring that they get the chance to participate in our state's great tradition of turkey hunting.

Current law stipulates that the DNR use a lottery type cumulative preference system to assign wild turkey hunting licenses and tags should the number of applicants in a given hunting zone or time period outnumber the available allocated number. Several preference categories are considered, including landowner status, the number of seasons someone has applied for but not received a license, and resident status.

Assembly Bill 82 and its companion Senate Bill 46 would enable Purple Heart recipients and veterans with a disability rating over 50% to obtain wild turkey hunting licenses and tags without being subject to the cumulative preference system. The state has already seen fit to extend this exemption to current members of the armed forces.

Our disabled and wounded veterans have sacrificed a great deal to serve their country. In recent years, several publications, including *USA Today* and *TIME Magazine*, have written about the therapeutic benefits that hunting and fishing can have on the lives of combat veterans. These men and women served on the front lines for us; it's only right that we move them near the front of the line when it comes to granting access to an activity that could prove beneficial for their mental and physical well-being.

Thanks again for accepting my written testimony on this legislation. I ask that you join me in support of this bill for our veterans.



Military Order of the Purple Heart

Department of Wisconsin



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March 15, 2017

Chairman Kleefisch and Members of the Assembly Committee on Natural Resources & Sporting Heritage;

The Military Order of the Purple Heart-Department of Wisconsin gladly expresses its SUPPORT for AB 82-relating to an exemption for resident disabled veterans and for recipients of the Purple Heart medal from the cumulative preference system for issuing wild turkey hunting licenses and tags.

Wisconsin has long been a great state to be an outdoorsman(woman) and a veteran. AB 82 continues this tradition in a very honorable and worthwhile way. We wish to thank Representative Hesselbein and all Assembly co-sponsors for bringing forth this bill. There is an impressive co-sponsorship list of bi-partisan support for this legislation who have stepped forth to show gratitude for our more severely disabled veterans and Purple Heart veterans who have bled for our country. AB 82 makes it easier for these brave men and women to experience the outstanding healing powers, both physical and mental, that the sporting heritage in Wisconsin provides.

The MOPH of WI encourages each member of this committee to vote for passage of AB 82 and we look forward to seeing it signed in to law!

Jason E. Johns

State Legislative Officer
MOPH Department of WI



WISCONSIN STATE REPRESENTATIVE

Dianne Hesselbein

79TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Testimony of Rep. Dianne Hesselbein
Committee on Natural Resources and Sporting Heritage
AB 82 and SB 46: Providing Wild Turkey Licenses
For Disabled Veterans and Purple Heart Medal Recipients
March 15, 2017

Chairman Kleefisch and members of the Committee:

Thank you for holding this public hearing and inviting me to speak in support of AB 82 and its companion bill, SB 46.

As many of you are aware, the return - the rebounding - of the wild turkey is a great Wisconsin success story. Since the turkey was re-introduced in 1976, its population has increased dramatically.

Last year, more than 213,672 permits were issued for the spring and fall wild turkey hunts.

The bill before us would give a small perk to the tiny fraction of resident Wisconsin turkey hunters who are disabled veterans and recipients of the Purple Heart medal. It would allow the Department of Natural Resources to issue turkey licenses and tags directly to disabled veterans and Purple Heart medalists. AB 82 would allow all Purple Heart recipients, in state and out of state, to be exempt from the cumulative preference system for issuing wild turkey hunting and license tags. Disabled Veterans with 50% disability would be included if they are Wisconsin residents.

Why are we doing this? It is a small way of saying "thank you" for veterans' service and physical sacrifice.

How many people are we talking about? We are talking about a few thousand people. In total there were 16,267 resident disabled fishing licenses issued for the 2015 license year, making up approximately 24% of the total fishing licenses issued.

According to DNR figures:

- In 2015 there were approximately 3,900 veterans with 70 percent disability who qualified for a resident disabled fishing permit
- In 2015 there were there were 1,314 disabled veterans with 50 percent disability who qualified for a disabled veteran recreation card
- And in 2015 there were 1,053 Purple Heart recipients who qualified as resident Purple Heart conservation patrons.
- There were also 14 non-resident Purple Heart conservation patrons in 2015

Based on these figures, a maximum of about 5,800 individuals could qualify for the disabled veteran and Purple Heart privilege. Not all of them would take advantage of it.

I talked to several disabled veterans and they said it would give a nice boost to disabled hunters who live everyday with their service-related injuries.

Please join me in supporting AB 82 and SB 46.

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS

OF THE UNITED STATES



DEPARTMENT OF WISCONSIN

TESTIMONY OF MICHAEL L 'GUNNER' FURGAL

STATE LEGISLATIVE CHAIRMAN, VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS

REGARDING 2017 ASSEMBLY BILL 82

Chairman Kleefisch, Ranking Member Milroy, and members of the Assembly Committee on Natural Resources and Sporting Heritage, I am Mike "Gunner" Furgal, State VFW Legislative Chairman. On behalf of State Commander Mike Eggleston, a Purple Heart recipient, and the more than 40,000 VFW and Auxiliary members located in every county of our state, I am here to ask you to vote in favor of Assembly Bill 82.

This bill would allow me, a 70% combat-related disabled veteran, to go to the head of the line when applying for a wild turkey license. AB 82 shows that the State of Wisconsin honors the sacrifices of Purple Heart recipients and disabled veterans.

Thank you Representative Hesselbein for introducing this bill. Thank you committee members for allowing me to testify in favor of AB 82.

Subject to your questions, that concludes my testimony.