

House Bill 272
March 22, 2005
Presented by Jeff Hagener
Senate Fish and Game Committee

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, for the record I am Jeff Hagener, Director of the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP). I am here to provide information on HB 272.

The service of the men and women of our Armed Forces is something we all should recognize and be proud of, especially the personal sacrifice of our disabled combat veterans. HB 272 proposes a half priced Deer and Antelope license for certain disabled combat veterans for recognition of their loss.

FWP has worked with the sponsor on the suggested amendments to the bill. Since there are several proposed bills for free or discounted licenses for veterans, FWP has not taken a position on HB 272, but is here to provide the following information: Currently, Montana residents with disabilities, whether veterans or not, are entitled to fish and to hunt game birds, not including turkeys, with only a conservation license. These disabled residents may also purchase regular resident deer and elk licenses at one-half price. During the 2004 license year FWP issued 3,271 Deer and 2,051 Elk licenses to residents with certified disabilities. There is no discount for Antelope licenses for persons with disabilities. However, FWP may issue up to 25 special Antelope licenses to resident or nonresident applicants, who are nonambulatory and have a Department certified permanent physical disability. FWP received 23 valid applications from disabled individuals for these special Antelope licenses in 2004.

We have not been able to estimate how many non-resident disabled veterans would take advantage of this law, but the number could be significant. The fiscal impacts of this bill, as amended, would likely be positive, but the impact on other hunters is hard to predict.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.