

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS: LICENSE-FEE LEGISLATION

QUESTION: Just how did the voting go when the license-fee legislation didn't pass the vote in the Game and Fisheries Committee?

ANSWER: Just a little background first. In the continuing battle to pass legislation to permit the PGC and the PFBC to set their own licensing fees, two dates have become significant--May 23, 2016, and April 26, 2017.

May 23, 2016. In a letter dated May 23, 2016, PA Auditor General, Eugene DePasquale told Reps. Frank Dermody (D-33, Allegheny Co., Democrat Leader)) and Michael Hanna (D-76, Center Co., Democratic Whip) his office would audit the PA Game Commission. The Legislative Budget and Finance Committee, as required by the Legislature, completed a review of the PGC Compliance with its Strategic Plan on June 2000, February 2003, March 2006, April 2009, February 2012, and June 2015. None of the lengthy reviews noted mismanagement. In fact, over 90% of the Plan Goals were fully or partially met--with lack of resources cited as being a major cause of the lack of completion. Yet Reps. Dermody and Hanna felt the need to petition the OAG to conduct an audit.

April 26, 2017. SB30, (authorizing the PA Fish and Boat Commission to set fishing and boating license fees), SB192 (authorizing the PA Game Commission to set hunting license fees), having overwhelmingly passed the Senate, came before the House Game and Fisheries Committee for a first vote. The first item considered was the PGC bill. Committee member David Maloney (R-District 130, Berks Co.), noted on record as a long-time PGC antagonist, brought to the attention of the committee that he received a phone call the previous day from the Office of the Auditor General regarding the fact that a PGC audit was imminent. After expressing concern about the number of vehicles the PGC had, Maloney motioned to table the PGC vote until the PGC audit was done. The motion passed 14-13, and the PGC vote was put in mothballs. At that point, Committee Chairman Keith Gillespie (R-District 47, York Co.), saw the writing on

the wall and pulled SB 30 from the agenda. The meeting was adjourned without the PFBC bill even being brought up.

(According to an article in Wild Outdoors by Bob Frye, September 14, 2016, some political observers have speculated the audit isn't being taken seriously, saying it's viewed as a little more than a political attempt to pressure the commission into changing its deer management program in return for a license fee increase.)

The vote to table SB192 went like this (**Notice the difference one vote can make** and also notice the familiar names from our area who voted for the motion):

House Committee Roll Call Votes

Committee GAME AND FISHERIES Date April 26, 2017

Bill/Resolution SB192 PN0224 Type of Motion **To Table**

Maker of Motion Rep. Maloney Seconded by Rep. Gergely

Brief Description: Amends the Game and Wildlife Code authorizing the PA Game Commission to set hunting license fees by regulation, under specific guidelines.

Majority Members

Gillespie, Keith - Chair **NAY**

Bernstine, Aaron **NAY**

Cook, Bud YEA

Cox, Jim YEA

Emrick, Joe YEA

English, Harold A. **NAY**

Everett, Garth D. **NAY**

Fee, Mindy	NAY
Jozwiak, Barry J.	YEA
Maloney, David M.	YEA
Mehaffie, Thomas L.	NAY
Moul, Dan	NAY
Peifer, Michael	NAY
Walsh, Justin M.	YEA
Warner, Ryan	YEA
Wentling, Parke	NAY

Minority Members

Barbin, Bryan - Chair	NAY
Flynn, Marty	YEA
Gergely, Marc J.	YEA
Haggerty, Kevin	YEA
Madden, Maureen	YEA
McCarter, Stephen	NAY
Mullery, Gerald J.	NAY
Neilson, Ed	YEA
Sims, Brian	YEA
Snyder , Pam	YEA
Vitali, Greg	NAY

Vote Summary

YEAS: 14

NAYS: 13

NV: 0

Passed.

And that's how the voting went. It points out the importance of ONE VOTE.

Related Notes:

Our local representative, Bud Cook(R- Washington Co.) voted to table the bill.

Rep. Marc Gergely (D-Allegheny) spoke in support of tabling the legislation, citing the lack of oversight that House members would have in raising the fees. That statement raises the question as to whether Gergely even read the bill. The proposed legislation has the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee, public comment, public hearings, two Game and Fisheries Committees, the General Assembly (twice), the Governor, the Attorney General, and a three-year expiration date involved. How much more oversight does the Committee need? [Gergely did not specify what additional oversight he thought was needed.]

On May 3, Rep.Jozwiak (R-Berks), who just days earlier voted to suspend legislation allowing the PGC to set its own fees, introduced a memorandum of intent to introduce legislation that would increase certain hunting license fees issued by the Pennsylvania Game Commission. Obviously, having the Legislature issuing fee increases would undercut the PGC request to set its own fees and keep the Legislature in charge.