

Chairman Staback, Chairman Dally and members of the House Game and Fisheries Committee; it is a great pleasure to address you today on our new point of sale system.

Needles to say we have been waiting for the system for some time. After several problems with the initial contractor's failure to produce a system, a new company purchased the contractor last summer and we now have an automated license system ready for operation to sell licenses on June 15.

The new system will be more customer friendly for our hunters and trappers, provide many opportunities for the Pennsylvania Game Commission, and make the administrative process easier for our licensing agents.

For our hunters and trappers the new system will provide numerous improvements over the prior system. The speed of the actual transaction will be much quicker. The security of information will be improved. For example, when you provide the social security number for the first and only time, you can type it in yourself and the number will not appear in the box in front of the agent. It then goes into a back end data set not to be revealed again unless the customer uses it for a purchase in the future. You will be asked one time if you have completed hunter trapper education course. It will forever be in the data base and never asked again. You will receive your antlerless application with the license to be mailed into the county treasurer. All the big game tags will be printed in the order you will use them. Next year when you purchase your license all you need to do is provide your driver's license number, your customer identification number or your social security number to get back into the system.

Our license buyers will also notice the improvement in the new system when it comes to displaying and carrying their licenses while afield. Our new licenses are printed on weather-resistant material that is easy and convenient to carry. And while Title 34 currently requires that a license be displayed, there is no requirement within the law that a license be displayed on the back of the license holder. That particular requirement stemmed from Commission regulations regarding our former licenses. As our new licenses are approximately one-third the size of our old licenses and are printed on a smaller font size, there is no longer any practical reason to require that the license be prominently displayed on the back of the license holder. If nothing else, our license buyers can be happy to know that the Commission is no longer going to require them to puncture their new hunting jackets.

HB 460, which removes the display requirement all together, is the next logical step towards full implementation of our new license system.

Opponents may claim that removing the display requirement will result in our Conservation Officers being forced to conduct more physical checks of hunters in the woods. I do not believe this will be the case. In reality, if a Conservation Officer conducts a field check of a hunter that check involves much more than simply looking at a hunter's back to determine whether there is a tag in a license holder. The license is still removed and inspected and compared with the person's identification as well as to ensure that the individual is in possession of any required special licenses or tags for the respective season. None of this information is available from simply looking at a backtag.

Furthermore, Pennsylvania is currently in the minority of states that continue to maintain the display requirement. Our discussions with states that have no display requirement have not uncovered any correlation between the display requirement and compliance with hunting laws and regulations.

The new system will also provide benefits to the Game Commission, particularly in the area of better managing the Commonwealth's wildlife. Our new system will afford us a better focus on specific survey instruments for specific species. And beginning this year, we will be offering successful hunters the opportunity to report their harvest through an online reporting system. This will be a simple process with dropdown menus through which the hunter can select the type of game harvested, as well as the WMU, county and township in which the harvest occurred. We urge our hunters will take advantage of this feature and increase our harvest reporting rates.

In addition, for the first time in the history of the Game Commission, we will now have the ability to know specifically who are license buyers are. This data will be used to build a more active retention program as we currently do not know how many of our hunters come in and out of hunting and we want to maintain them as active hunters.

For our licensing agents the new system will make their life much easier. There is no inventory of licenses. The cost accounting of all sales is on the system and can be checked at any time. On a weekly basis there will be an electronic transfer of funds that will eliminate the mailing in of paper inventories of sales and a check. The process of issuing a license will be much faster allowing availability for other commercial sales. In the future based on sales we can look at reducing the number of licenses needed to be sold to be an agent. We can also look at bond requirements based on a history of sales.

I have briefly offered some of the advantages of the new point of sale system. I am sure there will be minor glitches along the way as it is with any new system, but needless to say we are very excited about the system and the improved service it will provide to everyone. I would be very happy to answer any of your questions.