



**COUNTY TREASURER'S ASSOCIATION
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA**

Office of the Association President
Craig A. Ebersole
Lancaster County Treasurer
Lancaster County Courthouse
50 North Duke St., P.O. Box 83480
Lancaster, PA 17608-3480
Phone: 717-299-8222
Fax: 717-390-2319

2009-2010 OFFICERS

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Craig A. Ebersole
Lancaster County

First Vice President

Diane R. Marburger
Butler County

Second Vice-President

Frederic A. Wagner
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Secretary

Donna M. Schmitt
Somerset County
(814) 445-1482
Fax: 814-445-7991

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John C. Gross, II
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(717)240-6380

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October 22, 2009

Pennsylvania House of
Representatives

Committee on Game and Fisheries

TESTIMONY

October 22, 2009

Testimony

Craig A. Ebersole, Treasurer, County of Lancaster

President, County Treasurer's Association of Pennsylvania

Good morning, and on behalf of County Treasurers across the Commonwealth, thank you for the opportunity to have a voice in this morning's hearing. Thank you to Chairman Staback for inviting our Association.

As all of you know, this was the first year for the Pennsylvania Game Commission to sell hunting and trapping licenses via a "point of sale" methodology, and the first year to sell antlerless licenses via a pooled system..... that allowed any hunter living anywhere in the Commonwealth, to apply to any County Treasurer, to hunt in any Wildlife Management Unit (WMU). For example, the hunter could live in Warren County, send his application to Monroe County, seeking to hunt in a WMU that might include Franklin County. In previous years, the PGC issued allocations for each WMU and County Treasurers would receive an allocation of that WMU, based upon the percentage of that particular WMU within their county borders.

County Treasurers were facing a challenge this license season..... no one could predict with any effective knowledge, how many applications a particular county would receive. Would hunters apply to the county or WMU area where they wanted to hunt?? OR Would they send their application to their county of residence, seeking to hunt virtually across the Commonwealth?? We can answer that question today. Over 90% of them sent their application to the County Treasurer's office in the county of the applicant's residence.

So, how did it go? It was a brand new system, and in many aspects, it went as one might expect a brand new system to go..... the first two or three days was the learning curve, but that was quickly followed by applications being processed more efficiently and less costly than via the previous methodology. We saved time and thus money. The PGC did not need to hire temp staff to receive hundreds of thousands of applications here in Harrisburg and re-package them to be sent to County Treasurers. Hunters called us more often than in previous years.... Because they knew WHERE they sent their application. Previously, when they mailed it to only a WMU... it might have gone to any of five or six counties within their WMU of choice... they made less calls in prior years, because they had no idea where to call.

The single largest issue that County Treasurers dealt with this year..... that's easy, it was the poor quality of the "pink envelopes" in particular, their lack of glue. We did our little part to help the economy by purchasing and using miles of scotch tape. But the PGC is aware of the issue and will address it with their vendor going forward. Was there an issue with one or two counties who were severely understaffed, and thus failed to work on the applications from the first day? Yes. And neighboring County Treasurers, after receiving permission from the PGC jumped in and resolved those issues.

We are County Treasurers, so let me spend a moment on the financial component of antlerless licensing. For many years, we have been paid \$1 to process and issue each antlerless license.... Or what I affectionately call... being paid a buck for each doe. We have not appeared before you seeking an increase, nor have we attempted to have the law changed to allow us to exit this business. We do our jobs. We, like all of you, think of our hunters as both a customer AND a constituent. Our Association met last week with Mr. Carl Roe and his staff for about 90 minutes. We discussed system improvements and various "tweaking" of the system, that we feel will be good for the hunter, the PGC and our staffs. These minor system changes will allow us to be more efficient and should allow the PGC to keep our selling fee to the hunter where it has been for decades.

Now let's talk about the 800 pound gorilla in the room. The one stop shop. There is a certain big box type store in our state, that sells more hunting licenses than anyone else and that's a fact. The Saturday before we were to begin accepting antlerless applications, I stopped by that big box store in my neighborhood, and quietly stood in the sporting goods department as an observer. They had a single license sales terminal available for use, and during the hour or so that I observed their sales counter, the number of hunters waiting in that line varied between 19 and 24. Not exactly the level or quality of service our constituents should accept. And with every license sale, the money from the sales commission on that license, left our state and went to a corporate office somewhere in the Ozarks. Please don't take sales commission dollars from counties in the Commonwealth and send them out of state. County Treasurers don't sell clothing, televisions, or groceries.... We sell licenses for the Pennsylvania Game Commission, and for the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission and for the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Dog Law Enforcement. We have a well established relationship with those who hunt, fish, trap, or own a dog. We have, and we will continue to, go the second mile with our sportsmen. Over the years, County Treasurers across the Commonwealth have issued tens of millions of antlerless / doe permits resulting in tens of millions of dollars going to the General Fund in our counties. This is simply the wrong time to consider moving money away from local government. And we remain committed to being a partner with our hunters.

On behalf of the County Treasurer's Association, I want to thank you again for the opportunity to be part of this dialogue. I will attempt to answer any questions you may have for me at this time.