



**New York State Conservation Council Inc.**  
8 East Main Street, Ilion, New York 13357-1899

## **MEMORANDUM IN SUPPORT**

**Bill #**                    **A 4844** Englebright                    Same as **S 693** Ort

**Title: Requires the Department of Environmental Conservation review laws and policies pertaining to free or reduced cost hunting and fishing licenses.**

This legislation would provide for an analysis to determine the full cost and resultant impact of providing free hunting and fishing licenses to specific groups.

### **Justification:**

The NYSCC supports this legislation. With a steady stream of bills proposing free or reduced cost licenses to various groups, usually 20 to 25 per session, we believe that an understanding of the costs involved and the development of a common process for handling these proposals is needed.

It is entirely appropriate for the legislature to at least in part recognize the sacrifice incurred in military service, the value of volunteer public service or the needs of the disabled through the waiver of recreational license and access fees. The state is obligated, however, to recognize the cost of these waivers and ensure that they are shared equitably across the general population.

The Council is particularly concerned about any negative impact on the Conservation Fund. This is a dedicated account that receives its funding from fishing, hunting and trapping license fees and is committed to the state's fish and wildlife conservation efforts. License sales are also one of the factors that determine the state's share of federal excise tax funds under the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program. Free licenses are specifically excluded from the distribution formula.

In the 2015-2016 license sale year, free licenses and tags cost the Conservation Fund \$1,174,936 in revenue. This was compounded by a resulting loss of \$309,306 in our federal aid apportionment. A total loss of almost \$1.5 million to restoration funding.

We believe that the state should fund the licenses for which it does not wish to charge using monies appropriated from the General Fund. This assures that the cost is clearly identified and that it is shared across the full tax base and not borne entirely by the entity providing the service.

### **Contact:**

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