

**HUNTING/FISHING LICENSE:
ALLOW ANTI-HUNGER DONATION**

**House Bill 5312 as introduced
First Analysis (12-3-03)**

**Sponsor: Rep. Sal Rocca
Committee: Conservation and Outdoor
Recreation**

THE APPARENT PROBLEM:

For 13 years now, the Michigan Sportsmen Against Hunger have been providing food to families in need by making contributions to local food banks, soup kitchens, Salvation Army community centers, and other charitable organizations. The MSAH program was founded by the Safari Club International, Michigan United Conservation Clubs, Ted Nugent United Sportsmen of America, Michigan Bowhunters Association, the United Methodist Men's Club, the Food Bank Council of Michigan, and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. The program encourages Michigan hunters to donate venison and other game meat for programs that feed those in need. The program also accepts cash donations and other food, such as canned goods. In 2002, MSAH received more than 35,000 pounds of wild game meat. In hopes of expanding the MSAH program and feeding more needy individuals, it has been suggested that donations be solicited from sportsmen and women when they purchase a hunting or fishing license from the DNR.

THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:

The bill would amend Part 435 (Hunting and Fishing Licensing) of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act (NREPA) to allow individuals to donate \$1, which would be in addition to the regular license fee, to the Michigan Sportsmen Against Hunger at the time they apply for a hunting or fishing license. The donation request would be available for license applications made through the Internet or other authorized means (e.g. strategically placed kiosks) starting March 1, 2004, and starting November 1, 2004 for license applications made in person.

All donations would be deposited into the newly-created Sportsmen Against Hunger Fund. Like other funds, the state treasurer could receive money and other assets for deposit into the fund, direct investment of the fund, and credit to the fund any

interest and earnings. Also, any money remaining in the fund at the close of the fiscal year would remain in the fund and not lapse to the General Fund.

Money from the fund would be paid on a monthly basis to the Michigan Sportsmen Against Hunger or its successor organization, provided that the organization continues to be a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization, for the purpose of providing wild game and other food to needy persons. Should the organization no longer operate as a nonprofit, tax-exempt entity, the Natural Resources Commission would select a different organization to receive money for the purposes of the bill.

MCL 324.43540a.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Maryland began a program similar to the MSAH in 1997. From 1999 to 2001, hunters were able to provide a voluntary donation to the Farmers and Hunters Feeding the Hungry program at the time they purchased a hunting license. These voluntary contributions totaled about \$40,000 per year. In 2002, the Maryland General Assembly passed legislation (SB 599) that requires \$1 from the sale of each hunting license be used to support programs that process deer for needy individuals. According to the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, this resulted in more than \$100,000 for Farmers and Hunters Feeding the Hungry program.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:

The House Fiscal Agency notes that the bill would have no fiscal impact on the state or local units of government. (12-1-03)

ARGUMENTS:***For:***

The money raised through the donations would support a worthy program. Now, a hunter who wants to make a donation can drop off the carcass at a MSAH drop off station to have it processed and delivered to a local charitable organization, or the hunter can drop-off processed game animal directly to a charitable organization. While the processing costs are typically borne by the donor, the MSAH does have a voucher program in place that pays processors about 60 cents per pound, to offset their processing fee for whole deer donations. However, one of the biggest hurdles for the organization is funding, even though the program is run entirely by volunteers. The donations collected by this bill, can be used to offset some of the processing costs and, hopefully, further expand the program and provide more assistance to persons in need.

Against:

The Department of Natural Resources (and others) testified in opposition to the bill, out of concern about the dangerous precedent this bill would set. While the MSAH is certainly a worthy program, it is generally believed that this is not the proper role of government. In essence, the state would solicit contributions for a private, non-profit entity. If it does this for one entity, how can it reasonably not do the same for other, equally worthy, organizations?

Response:

The state has already done this in other areas. For example, the state has offered tax check-offs to solicit contributions to worthy causes, and it provides a host of tax preferences for contributions to selected nonprofit organizations, as well as to individuals and businesses to influence taxpayer behavior.

POSITIONS:

The Michigan Sportsmen Against Hunger supports the bill. (12-3-03)

The Food Bank Council of Michigan supports the bill. (12-3-03)

The Safari Club International supports the bill. (12-3-03)

The Department of Natural Resources opposes the bill. (12-3-03)

The Michigan United Conservation Clubs opposes the bill. (12-3-03)

Analyst: M. Wolf

■ This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan House staff for use by House members in their deliberations, and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.