

**MINUTES OF THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES**

**Eighty-second Session
April 4, 2023**

The Senate Committee on Natural Resources was called to order by Chair Julie Pazina at 3:31 p.m. on Tuesday, April 4, 2023, in Room 2144 of the Legislative Building, Carson City, Nevada. The meeting was videoconferenced to Room 4412E of the Grant Sawyer State Office Building, 555 East Washington Avenue, Las Vegas, Nevada. [Exhibit A](#) is the Agenda. [Exhibit B](#) is the Attendance Roster. All exhibits are available and on file in the Research Library of the Legislative Counsel Bureau.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Senator Julie Pazina, Chair
Senator Melanie Scheible, Vice Chair
Senator Edgar Flores
Senator Pete Goicoechea
Senator Ira Hansen

GUEST LEGISLATORS PRESENT:

Senator Scott Hammond, Senatorial District No. 18

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Alysa Keller, Policy Analyst
Erin Sturdivant, Counsel
Donna Crawford Kennedy, Committee Secretary

OTHERS PRESENT:

Warren Hardy, Nevada Pest Management Association
Steve Walker, Eureka County
Ashley Jeppson, Administrator, Division of Plant Health and Compliance, State
Department of Agriculture
Rachel Buzzetti, Secretary, Nevada Outfitters and Guide Association
Mitch Bailey, Nevada Outfitters and Guide Association
Henry Krenka, Hidden Lake Outfitters; President, Nevada Outfitters and Guide
Association

Senate Committee on Natural Resources
April 4, 2023
Page 2

Paul Strasdin, Sage-n-Pine Guide & Outfitter
Tina Nappe
David McNinch, Board of Wildlife Commissioners
Patrick Donnelly, Great Basin Director, Center for Biological Diversity
Rex Flowers, Director, Coalition for Nevada's Wildlife, Inc.
Karen Boeger
Joel Blakeslee

CHAIR PAZINA:

We will open with the work session on Senate Bill (S.B.) 77.

SENATE BILL 77: Revises provisions relating to the Nevada State Board on Geographic Names. (BDR 26-344)

ALYSA KELLER (Policy Analyst):

I will read the summary of the bill and the amendment from the work session document ([Exhibit C](#)).

CHAIR PAZINA:

I will entertain a motion to amend and do pass S.B. 77.

SENATOR HANSEN MOVED TO AMEND AND DO PASS AS AMENDED
S.B. 77.

SENATOR SCHEIBLE SECONDED THE MOTION.

THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

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CHAIR PAZINA:

We will move to the work session on S.B. 90.

SENATE BILL 90: Designates the wild mustang as the official state horse of the State of Nevada. (BDR 19-560)

MS. KELLER:

I will read the summary of the bill and the amendments from the work session document ([Exhibit D](#)).

SENATOR GOICOECHEA:

I am going to support the bill as amended. More language is needed for the management of horses. As you travel east along the Highway 50 Corridor, the only animals you see are horses and they are not in good condition. They are struggling this winter. It is not the horses' fault; it is our fault because we do not have the proper management. I would like to see management reflected in the bill. I will support the bill and recognize the horse for what it is. It is not the fault of the horses; we are not managing them and the resource damage they are doing.

SENATOR HANSEN:

Is there anything in the amendment about creating the wild horse designation based on reaching appropriate management levels as required by the Wild and Free Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971?

ERIN STURDIVANT (Counsel):

The current language does not provide anything contingent on the management of horses. The bill is only to designate the wild mustang as the official State horse.

SENATOR HANSEN:

It is awkward to be against this bill. Still, the reality is this: two counties in my District are currently contemplating declarations of emergency due to the wild horse overpopulation that reached epidemic levels.

Jon Raby, State Director of the Bureau of Land Management in Nevada, said he does not have the resources to manage the horses. The pens are already overfilled, whereas Nebraska or other states can manage 50,000 horses.

My concern is how we may be sending the rest of the Nation an indication that the Legislature of Nevada is not only accepting the current situation with wild horses, but we are even going as far as to designate, as our official State horse, an animal that is causing incredible levels of ecological and environmental damage that may take decades to repair. I cannot support the bill.

CHAIR PAZINA:

I will entertain a motion to amend and do pass S.B. 90.

Senate Committee on Natural Resources
April 4, 2023
Page 4

SENATOR SCHEIBLE MOVED TO AMEND AND DO PASS AS AMENDED
S.B. 90.

SENATOR FLORES SECONDED THE MOTION.

THE MOTION CARRIED. (SENATOR HANSEN VOTED NO.)

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CHAIR PAZINA:
We will move to the work session on S.B. 176.

SENATE BILL 176: Establishes provisions relating to the conservation of
groundwater. (BDR 48-79)

MS. KELLER:
I will read the summary of the bill and the amendments from the work session
document ([Exhibit E](#)).

SENATOR GOICOECHEA:
I was reading newspaper articles indicating this bill is a golden parachute for
those selling water rights. It is not—it is a lifeline. I want to make sure people
realize this is not about buying water rights. This is a bill we can support and
recognize the fact that water rights are over-appropriated and over-pumped. We
must do something with those water rights; this is just one tool. If we approve
the bill, it will need to go to the Senate Committee on Finance and hopefully,
we can get a few dollars to fund the bill and move it forward.

CHAIR PAZINA:
I will entertain a motion to amend and do pass.

SENATOR SCHEIBLE MOVED TO AMEND AND DO PASS AS AMENDED
S.B. 176.

SENATOR FLORES SECONDED THE MOTION.

THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

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Senate Committee on Natural Resources
April 4, 2023
Page 5

CHAIR PAZINA:

We will move to the work session on S.B. 269.

SENATE BILL 269: Revises provisions related to animal cruelty. (BDR 50-246)

MS. KELLER:

I will read the summary of the bill and the amendments from the work session document ([Exhibit F](#)).

CHAIR PAZINA:

I will entertain a motion to amend and do pass S.B. 269.

SENATOR SCHEIBLE MOVED TO AMEND AND DO PASS AS AMENDED
S.B. 269.

SENATOR FLORES SECONDED THE MOTION.

THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

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CHAIR PAZINA:

We will move to the work session on Senate Joint Resolution (S.J.R.) 2.

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 2: Urges Congress to require the United States Board on Geographic Names to consider renaming the Sheldon National Wildlife Refuge as the E. R. Sans National Wildlife Refuge. (BDR R-170)

MS. KELLER:

I will read the summary of the bill from the work session document ([Exhibit G](#)).

CHAIR PAZINA:

I will entertain a motion to do pass S.J.R. 2.

SENATOR SCHEIBLE MOVED TO DO PASS S.J.R. 2.

SENATOR HANSEN SECONDED THE MOTION.

THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

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CHAIR PAZINA:

We will move to the work session on S.J.R. 3.

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 3: Urges the United States Bureau of Reclamation to consider certain actions, alternatives and measures for the protection and management of the Colorado River. (BDR R-349)

MS. KELLER:

I will read the summary of the bill from the work session document ([Exhibit H](#)).

CHAIR PAZINA:

I will entertain a motion to do pass S.J.R. 3.

SENATOR SCHEIBLE MOVED TO DO PASS S.J.R. 3.

SENATOR FLORES SECONDED THE MOTION.

THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

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CHAIR PAZINA:

We will now hear S.B. 159.

SENATE BILL 159: Revises provisions relating to pest control. (BDR 49-608)

SENATOR SCOTT HAMMOND (Senatorial District No. 18):

I spend a considerable amount of time in my job outside of this building, trying to find pathways for young people to get into certain industries. Sometimes there are barriers. We are trying to find a way to attract younger people into the pest management industry. The barrier into the industry is that everyone needs to take a test that is not easy to pass. The industry wants to make sure new people understand what they are doing. But, at the same time, the industry needs to give applicants an opportunity to gain experience in the industry so

they can pass the test. When people learn daily, doing something day in and day out, they learn and understand more.

Pest control is an industry considered essential, but even though it is essential, it was hard to attract people during COVID-19. Senate Bill 159 is designed to try to find a pathway for people to learn the industry, so it will be easier for them to pass the test and work in the pest control industry. It would be good to have an internship in many industries so young people can learn the trade.

WARREN HARDY (Nevada Pest Management Association):

The intent of this legislation is to expand opportunities for employment in the pest management industry. During COVID-19, we lost employees and have not been able to replace them. We can hire them, but we are not able to get the required testing for them to work independently on the jobsite. Nevada currently has one of the most difficult testing processes for pest applicators in the U.S. It is a two-part exam; the first part, a general exam, has a much higher pass rate. I am guessing the pass rate to be 70 percent to 75 percent. However, the second part of the exam is category-specific, and we have a significantly higher fail rate on that part of the test. It often takes two or three attempts to pass.

Under current laws and in a best-case scenario, employees end up on the payroll for 30 to 60 days before they pass the test so they can work in the field. It is not affordable for our members. Many pest control companies are small businesses. We are here to try to find some common ground where the public will be protected, and the companies can provide field training for these individuals before they take the test.

We have found some of these people are visual learners. The requirement to be hired includes having a high school diploma or its equivalent. Often, it is far easier for individuals in the field to say when something is familiar to them.

We believe the test needs to be updated. It is a bit antiquated. One requirement is to know the Latin name of a red ant, when I think really what we want to do is just squish it. We have talked to the State Department of Agriculture (NDA) about updating the test. There would be a significant advantage for individuals in the field to be able to experience what they are going to need to know for the test.

I spoke with the NDA regarding the amendment ([Exhibit I](#)) to find out if there are safety issues that should be included in the bill rather than leaving them up to the regulations. Under current law, the company can have an individual assist a licensed applicator, but the challenge is time and cost. If it takes 30 to 60 days to pass the test, it adds to the cost of the service for a business. The other challenge is that it creates an incentive for us not to hire new people into the industry, but to hire somebody who is already licensed. In most cases, our members would love to hire new employees; they prefer individuals who want to come in and be trained according to company standards.

To recap, the bill intends to add direct supervision, which is already allowed by law. The industry wants to specify immediate supervision, which means the supervisor, who is a licensed applicator, must be directly present at the time the work is being done. Direct supervision will mean if the new employee has questions, their supervisor will be with them to answer them. The supervisor could also assess their abilities and willingness to do the job. We propose that the statute limit the new employee's ability to apply pesticides until they are licensed. We would like to see this bill go to regulation so we can have meaningful conversations with the public.

SENATOR GOICOECHEA:

Are you applying restricted pesticides and is that why you are asking for the provisional licensure be with a supervisor who has their name and a number on the license?

MR. WARREN:

During the training period, we want to restrict individuals who are not licensed from applying restricted pesticides without a supervisor being immediately present. They can do the non-restricted pesticides, which are more standard, but not the restricted pesticides. When in use, those should have a supervisor immediately present.

CHAIR PAZINA:

We will hear testimony in support.

STEVE WALKER (Eureka County):

Eureka County is in full support of the amended version of S.B. 159.

CHAIR PAZINA:

Seeing no one in opposition, is there anyone who would like to speak in neutral?

ASHLEY JEPPSON (Administrator, Division of Plant Health and Compliance, State Department of Agriculture):

I want to provide some information to help connect the dots. We are happy to work with the industry on regulation. We certainly want to see opportunities for businesses. We support our pest control companies; we just want to make sure public, environmental and user safety is not compromised somewhere in the mix. We have some ideas we can explore in pursuing this in regulation.

Currently, in statute and regulations, commercial pest control applicators are limited to immediate supervision. Those people need to be there directly overseeing what the unlicensed people are doing. Federal law does allow for direct supervision, but there is a lot of additional criteria for the supervisor. We have discussed those things with Mr. Hardy. There might be some options we can look at to try to make sure safety pieces are not missed.

We are auditing all our testing, trying to make sure the needs of the industry are reflected. The major failure areas are in reviewing and understanding the label and knowing how to mix the materials properly, so they are not over applying a toxin. We want to make sure the test reflects what is needed to protect the public and environment.

SENATOR HAMMOND:

I do not want to belabor it, but again this bill is about making sure that we have pathways to get young people interested in this industry. Sometimes actually working with the pesticides helps someone remember the procedures better, so they can pass the test easier.

CHAIR PAZINA:

We will close the hearing on S.B. 159 and open the hearing on S.B. 224.

SENATE BILL 224: Revises the membership of the Board of Wildlife Commissioners. (BDR 45-1013)

SENATOR PETE GOICOECHEA (Senatorial District No. 19):

I am presenting S.B. 224 which would expand the membership of the Board of Wildlife Commissioners. It is an effort to bring new voices, especially to our

County Advisory Boards (CABs). When the Board of Commissioners started, it was comprised of representatives from each of the 17 CABs.

The current makeup of the Commission is nine members and five are sportsmen. I have no problem with that, but we want to expand the Commission by adding a member from the CABs, appointed by the Governor. The other seat should be from the group of guides and outfitters. They deserve some recognition and a seat on the Commission. They would bring in a level of expertise the average sportsperson would not have. The guides and outfitters live in the outdoors. They are not necessarily about taking animals; they do photography trips, pack trips into the wild and teach about habitat and wildlife.

We need a little more expertise on the Commission. I know there are Commissioners here who may take offense to that, but it takes a level of expertise rather than just sportsmanship. The single requirement for a sportsperson to become a member of the Commission is having a valid hunting or fishing license in three of the last four years.

The Commission has lost the direction we want when it comes to what is happening both to our habitat and our numbers. It is time we revisited it. This bill just expands the Commission. Anybody today who thinks that the Commission will not be changed going forward is fooling themselves.

I am asking this Committee to help put a Commission in place that truly reflects the needs of our wildlife and our sportspeople in this State.

There are two people here, Rachel Buzzetti and Mitch Bailey from the Nevada Outfitters and Guide Association (NOGA), who can explain their issues and their desire to be represented on the Commission.

RACHEL BUZZETTI (Secretary, Nevada Outfitters and Guide Association):

My husband and I operate an outfitting business in northeastern Nevada at the base of the Ruby Mountains. Senate Bill 224, as explained by Senator Goicoechea, would expand the Commission by two members: one a licensed master guide and the other a CAB member.

This bill clearly takes a stab at expanding oversight and transparency, which is much needed within the Commission. Throughout the years, the Commission

has made policies and regulations adversely affecting the guide industry, mostly financially. First, let me give you some history.

In 2004, the Commission proposed removing the second draw opportunity for nonresident hunters, who are most of our customers. When nonresident hunters were removed from the draw, it slashed many of the outfitters' annual income that year and for years to come.

In 2018, the Commission approved a change in their draw system that was supposed to be more friendly but, in the meantime, they told outfitters they could no longer receive the list of sportspeople. This was a successful salable list from which outfitters could send brochures to inform hunters that elk hunting was available in the area they had drawn. It was a way to solicit those hunters, offering our services if they are inclined to hire a guide. But the Commission decided we could not continue to receive the list. It was another slash to the opportunity to sell outfitter services. The decision by the Commission cost the NOGA no less than \$500,000 in lost revenue that year and for years to come.

In 2019, NOGA proposed creating an advisory board to the Board of Wildlife Commissioners so they could advise them when outfitting issues came forward. The Commission testified against creating the advisory board. So, as you can see, over the last decade the Commission does make policies affecting our business, and it only seems reasonable to appoint a licensed master guide to the Commission. It does not have to be someone in the NOGA, but it would be a master guide licensed through the State who would become a member of the Commission.

There are over 100 master guides licensed in the State. All of them have a good understanding of wildlife, and they spend a lot of time in the field. I would say any master guide is in the field at least 100 days each year; not just for the week or two listed on their tag. They really have a good grasp of what is going on with wildlife. They hunt multiple species and are knowledgeable about the resources. They are aware of what is going on with the numbers when it comes to hunting. They work from sunup to sundown scouting, preparing camps, saddling horses, getting equipment ready, and hunting so the sportspeople have a safe and exciting outdoor experience. Outfitters not only take the public hunting, but they also hold trail rides, photography expeditions, fishing trips and

overnight camping trips. It is particularly important to keep these businesses financially sound and sustainable.

Expanding the Commission by two members would ensure there is diversity, some transparency and sufficient oversight within the Board of Wildlife Commissioners. There is already a ranching representative on the Commission looking out for ranching interests, a farmer representative, a conservationist and five sportspeople, totaling nine seats. We are only asking for two seats to be added to ensure grassroots participation, as well as to expand the knowledge base. The outfitters would be a real asset when the Commission is making wildlife management decisions. I hope you can take time to look at this change in the existing statute and take into consideration the role of outfitters and guides.

MITCH BAILEY (Nevada Outfitters and Guide Association):

I am a little conflicted by S.B. 224, and I am going to share my history with this bill. I have been outfitting in Nevada for 30 years, trapping, hunting, fishing and outfitting. Surprisingly, I was contacted by senior leadership at the Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW) saying I must do something to curtail the objective of getting a guide or outfitter on the Commission. My first thought was, why would they think I had any influence? Is it my membership in NOGA for the last 30 years? Or is it my relationship with sportspeople's groups and the National Trappers Association? This is not the first time I have testified in the Legislature supporting hunting and trapping issues.

I was caught a little off guard to receive a call from senior leadership of NDOW thinking I would not be in favor of having a member of the NOGA on the Commission. Shortly after the first call, I was contacted by members of the Commission urging me to do the same thing, and I asked the same question. Again, I wondered why do they think I would not want a master guide or a member of a CAB on the Commission?

I realize you will probably hear from those in opposition to this bill because it opens the door for anti-hunters to be on the Commission. However, we cannot go forward as a State agency, or as individuals, deciding our future based on the fear of anti-hunters or other outside groups. If we are going to do that, we might as well fold up right now. I was contacted again by the Commission asking me to oppose this bill. At this point, I cannot do anything about it

because I put my faith in the Commission and I put my faith in the CABs to do their job.

Seven weeks ago, I was contacted by senior leadership in the Commission and asked, again, to oppose S.B. 224. They said we do not want anti-hunters, and we can make something happen to get a guide on the Commission without opening it up and adding seats.

Senior administrative people contacted me before leaving NDOW and asked me what I thought about changing the black bear hunt in Nevada, the unit boundaries and the quotas. They asked me because of my inherent knowledge of the black bear hunt. I have been to the Legislature testifying about black bears many times over the last 10 to 12 years. I thought what they were proposing was wonderful. It was the best thing I had heard come out of NDOW in years and I was 100 percent in favor of it.

They put it out to the Washoe CAB. I went to the Washoe CAB meeting and gave testimony. At the end of my testimony, despite numerous others in the room in opposition to it, the chairman of the Washoe CAB told me the Commission was thankful I was there because I had changed their minds and they liked the proposal. I was not able to attend the Commission meeting due to a prior commitment, but I messaged two members of the Commission and told them I was in favor of the proposal. The changes proposed were the best I had heard in years. The next day it went to the Commission and was voted down; one vote in favor and seven against. I could not believe it. One of the members of senior leadership said they did not get the messages before the vote, so they just voted against it. He said they were sorry, and it sounded like they missed a good opportunity.

Keeping in mind, as an outfitter in this State who gathers information, does his job and takes it seriously, I would never expect anybody to be voting in opposition to something they knew nothing about. The members of NOGA are not represented. We are told to give the Commission a chance, and they will represent us; but then, something that gravely affects an outfitting business, like the black bear hunt, is voted out because they did not know enough about the proposal. That should not happen, it is not what the Commission should do. There should be members representing all factions of wildlife management. At least the Commission would have additional information needed to make an educated choice or decision on critical issues.

In closing, I would like to add that there are a lot of people in this room who are friends of mine who do not support what I am saying right now. However, I can guarantee you, behind closed doors, we have all had the conversation. We cannot manage wildlife or select Commission members based on the fear we are opening the door to somebody whose beliefs are not ours.

CHAIR PAZINA:

We will hear testimony in support of S.B. 224.

HENRY KRENKA (Hidden Lake Outfitters; President, Nevada Outfitters and Guide Association):

I encourage you to pass S.B. 224. I have submitted a letter of support ([Exhibit J](#)). This bill proposes to expand and diversify the Commission. The Commission makes wildlife policies affecting outfitters and guides; many of those decisions are happening without the knowledge of the outfitters and guides. There needs to be more oversight and transparency on the Commission so any proposals made by NDOW are fully understood and any issues can be openly discussed by all involved and affected.

The Commission is designed to manage wildlife. Adding members whose livelihood and primary interest is Nevada wildlife would be beneficial to the Commission. Currently, the Commission consists of members whose primary interests are ranching, farming, conservation and the sportsperson. There are no members whose primary interest is wildlife even though that is the name of the Commission. I am hoping you will see the value of two more members added to the Commission.

PAUL STRASDIN (Sage-n-Pine Guide & Outfitter):

I have been guiding and outfitting since 1988. Sage-n-Pine has seen a lot of changes in the Commission. I am grateful for the current Commission, but the changes we discussed today are good, adding a master guide and a CAB member. With the guides and outfitters spending time in the field, we see what is going on, such as the decline of herds or in some places where the herds are in excess. We see where the habitat fails because of weather, poor management or overgrazing. Those are the main things the Commission examines.

Senate Committee on Natural Resources
April 4, 2023
Page 15

There are over 100 master guides in Nevada who cover a lot of territory in the State. I encourage the Committee to pass S.B. 224, allowing for the addition of one licensed master outfitter and one member from CAB.

MR. WALKER:
Eureka County is in full support of this bill.

CHAIR PAZINA:
There is a letter in support of S.B. 224 from Mr. Jim Cooney, Chair of the Elko County Advisory Board to Manage Wildlife ([Exhibit K](#)).

We will hear testimony in opposition to S.B. 224.

TINA NAPPE:
I have an ongoing interest in Nevada's wildlife that consumes me but the Commission is fine right now. There are five sportspeople, any of whom could become a guide or a CAB member. The Nevada Department of Wildlife is responsible for almost 800 species of wildlife, most of which guides or CABs do not deal with very much. The Department is facing huge wildlife populations, climate change, fires and droughts. We need people who are going to be visionary and prepare for the lands we are going to need and the types of programs that are important. I do not think the addition of these two members will help accomplish this goal, so I am opposed to this bill.

DAVID MCNINCH (Board of Wildlife Commissioners):
The Commission voted to oppose S.B. 224 as it is currently written. The Commission felt guides are sufficiently represented in the current makeup of the Commission as one of our members is a subguide. The proposed additions would have narrow constituencies bringing into question what other interests should have specific representation. Where do you draw the line? The Commission is certain the interim study being considered by the Legislature to evaluate the makeup of certain boards, including the Board of Wildlife Commissioners, should be completed before any substantive changes are considered or made.

PATRICK DONNELLY (Great Basin Director, Center for Biological Diversity):
We are opposed to this bill. While we heard about the sort of injustice inherent in not having a guide on the Commission, it is hardly the only injustice in the composition of the Commission. The Commission is overwhelmingly slanted

toward consumptive wildlife users; most Commissioners are hunting license holders. This means the Commission reaches decisions benefiting hunters above other users. The Commission is also overwhelmingly rural and tends to have a gender and racial makeup that does not reflect the diversity of Nevada. We do agree the composition of the Commission needs to be revised, but we disagree the primary issue of concern is the absence of a hunting guide on the Commission.

There is another bill before you this Session which calls for the Joint Interim Natural Resources Committee to study the composition of State commissions, including the Board of Wildlife Commission. This would provide a democratic venue for us to examine the current composition of the Commission and how it might be modified to better suit the needs of Nevadans. This may include adding a guide to the Commission. This may also include changing the geographic or demographic composition of the Commission. The last thing we need right now is to further entrench hunting interests on this Commission.

This bill is premature. Instead of supporting this bill, we urge you to support Senate Bill 88, which will address this issue and far more pressing issues with the composition of the Commission.

SENATE BILL 88: Requires the Joint Interim Committee on Natural Resources to conduct an interim study of certain state agencies. (BDR S-345)

CHAIR PAZINA:

We have letters in opposition to S.B. 224 from Bryce Pollock, Nevada Chapter of Backcountry Hunters & Anglers (Exhibit L), Tobi Tyler, Sierra Club-Toiyabe Chapter (Exhibit M), and Ryan Browné (Exhibit N).

SENATOR GOICOECHEA:

There is a small fiscal note on this bill, about \$28,000. If the bill is approved in this Committee, it may have to be referred to the Senate Committee on Finance. It may not need to be referred since it would just be meeting the expenses of the two additional members of the Commission.

CHAIR PAZINA:

We will close the hearing on S.B. 224 and open the hearing on S.B. 311.

SENATE BILL 311: Revises provisions relating to wildlife. (BDR 45-168)

SENATOR IRA HANSEN (Senatorial District No.14):

Senatorial District No. 14 includes 34,000 square miles in Nevada. One of the biggest issues in my District is outdoor recreation. We have 150,000 people we call "season ticket holders," who have hunting, fishing and trapping licenses in the rural parts of the State. It is a significant part of the economy. What has happened over the years, though, is the makeup of people who participate as season ticket holders is aging. I am 62, and perhaps the average age in the season ticket holder bracket. We have been attempting, for a long time, to encourage more youth to enter the field.

Everybody recognizes there are all sorts of interesting problems with our youth, especially since they have so many recreational opportunities. Most of the recreation is, unfortunately, sedentary in nature. Obesity issues with our youth have expanded dramatically. Consequently, people have been trying to find ways to get young people out in the field doing things like hunting and fishing. Some of the obstacles are barriers and will be addressed today.

This bill, S.B. 311, is two parts: the first deals with someone who gets a big game tag being allowed to give the tag to somebody under 18 years of age. We do have a conceptual amendment to present on this bill. The bill was brought forward on behalf of Mr. Rex Flowers, who will walk through the concept behind it and why we decided to bring this forward. Mr. Flowers will explain the bill.

REX FLOWERS (Director, Coalition for Nevada's Wildlife, Inc.):

In the conceptual amendment, we would like to change Section 1 to read:

The Commission shall adopt regulations establishing a program which authorizes a person to transfer his or her tag to hunt a big game mammal to any person with a resident junior hunter license.

Senate Bill 311 would authorize the Board of Wildlife Commissioners to establish a program whereby big game tags can be transferred to junior hunters. *Nevada Administration Code* (NAC) 502.063 already defines junior hunters. The program will be set up through NAC 502.417 by the Commission.

Nevada has had a junior hunt program for over 20 years and we have always had more applicants than we have tags available. The gap is getting wider. Our

deer herd numbers are down and our junior hunter applications have increased. We cannot set the quotas or sell tags for something not there. The Nevada Department of Wildlife sets the quotas. Those quotas are released for input from the public, sportspeople and from CABs who meet and send recommendations to the Commission.

Generally, where junior hunters are concerned, people recommend increasing the quotas for them and taking that opportunity away from adult hunters. There is nothing wrong with that. It is great for the junior hunters, and we want to preserve our heritage and culture. Today, the deer herd numbers are down, we have a lack of habitat, there is drought and wildfires and a lack of management of feral horses and burros. Junior hunter applications are up by over 15 percent, but their quotas are down by over 15 percent. This bill, S.B. 311, is not going to eliminate that problem; but at the very least, it will give more junior hunters the opportunity to hunt based on the generosity of adult hunters, without having further impact on the resource.

SENATOR HANSEN:

This is not a new concept; this is already in law. The focus of this entire bill is to allow more young people to be able to hunt.

The next portion of the bill is about hunter safety. A person born after January 1, 1960, is required to take a hunter safety course. I remember very distinctly, in the summer of 1972, taking the hunter safety course. The world has changed a lot since 1972. There are so many more things for young people to do outside of hunting. The current regulations on hunter safety says if you are 18 or older, you can do the training online. If you are younger than 18, you are required to attend an eight-hour class.

I got involved in this because my sons and one of my daughters went through the hunter safety class. And now, four of my grandchildren have also taken the hunter safety class. I became aware of a significant roadblock, something that is acting as an impediment to allowing young people to enter this outdoor activity. The hunter safety courses are offered by NDOW volunteers, but the number of courses available simply do not come close to meeting the demand. For example, there was a course offered near my grandchildren's home that they tried to sign up for twice. It was only offered every six months or so. The classes were full; there were available classes in the Yerington area. The classes are eight hours long. If they did not have their grandpa involved and

actively promoting it, they would not have taken the classes and we would have lost those children, who otherwise would have been in the field. Because of COVID-19, they can do the entire course online, despite their age.

A table with hunter education numbers ([Exhibit O](#)) shows the numbers for people under 17 and adults 18 and over from 2010, the first year the course was taught online, through 2023. You will see there is a dramatic spike in the number of children who participated and passed the course in 2020. There were fewer obstacles; they did not have to take an all-day course offered by NDOW volunteers only occasionally. They could do the entire course online.

In discussions with NDOW Director Alan Jenne earlier today, one of the concerns is that by having an all-day course, they can help take care of some young people who might need more resources to take classes online or have someone to help them. The problem with that argument is that it is highly likely the young people who participate in the class have at least some family member who is a sportsperson with a hunting background and who deals with things like firearms and so forth. It would be unusual for someone not exposed to hunting and fishing to take the class. I would suggest, while we always want to err on the side of caution when it comes to things like hunting accidents, we also need to recognize that we are losing a huge cohort of younger people who would otherwise enter the sportsperson ranks.

The real purpose of the bill is to offer the entire course online rather than forcing people to do an eight-hour in-person course. As you can see on the chart, almost 1,500 more children a year took the class when offered online versus when it needed to be taken in person. To me, the benefits of doing it all online greatly outweigh the potential risks that may occur if we keep it as it is currently.

Our focus is to expand the number of young people who have an opportunity to participate in the great outdoors in Nevada. Outdoor recreation, from my District especially, is a huge component of the recreation industry. We want to expand and create as many opportunities as possible for the younger generations in Nevada.

CHAIR PAZINA:

To confirm, a junior hunter is someone under the age of 18, correct?

MR. FLOWERS:

Yes, according to NAC, a junior hunter is defined as an individual who is 12 years old by the first day of the hunting season and does not turn 18 years old until after the last day of the hunting season.

CHAIR PAZINA:

Regarding the online education, what guardrails are in place? I have heard a lot of educators share the challenges they had with children during COVID-19 in the classrooms, and that students were not retaining the knowledge as well as they do in person. I would just want to make sure the guardrails are in place for online education, as opposed to education being in person.

SENATOR HANSEN:

The reality is, if you are 18 and older, you already can do it entirely online. They have not seen any evidence of an increase in hunting accidents by people 18 and older. As the program itself is still online, the guardrails are in place. And, frankly, even if you take an all-day course one time in your life, it does not change your experiences in the field to the degree you would expect. My grandfather taught me about firearms, firearm safety and how to correctly shoot when I was five years old. When I took the course at age 11, the amount of knowledge I got, compared to what I received in the field from the people I was with, was minuscule. Since we have not seen any spike in accidents since offering the course online, I would say the guardrails are in place.

Students still must pass the same tests online they would have taken in person. And, while it is true there will not be somebody standing there literally handing them a gun, they will still get all the fundamentals of gun safety through the online course.

CHAIR PAZINA:

When someone passes a tag down to a junior hunter, they no longer have a tag, so would they need to apply for a separate big game hunting tag?

MR. FLOWERS:

Tags are allotted only once a year through the draw. When someone gives their tag to a junior hunter, they give up their chance to hunt that year, unless they accompany the junior hunter.

SENATOR HANSEN:

A person can apply for tags for various animals, elk, mule deer and antelope. If they give their tag for one species, they cannot hunt for that species, but can still hunt for the others.

CHAIR PAZINA:

I would love to see statistics for 2020 when those under 18 took the course online. Was there any effect at all as opposed to previous years?

SENATOR HANSEN:

Obviously, it is a little early to see the total number of hunting accidents in Nevada when you consider there are about 150,000 licensed hunters. I do not think it is more than ten a year. Everyone is a lot more conscientious now than before. Director Jenne is here; he may be able answer your question. It will be interesting to see, in the next few years, if there is a spike in accidents among the people who took the course online versus those who took it in a more traditional way.

CHAIR PAZINA:

We will hear testimony in support of S.B. 311.

There are letters of support from Ryan Browné ([Exhibit P](#)) and from Bryce Pollock, Nevada Chapter of Backcountry Hunters & Anglers ([Exhibit Q](#)).

MR. WALKER:

Eureka County is in favor of this bill.

KAREN BOEGER:

I am speaking for myself today. Nevada Backcountry Hunters & Anglers, who I usually represent, submitted a written comment. So, I am speaking as a mother, grandmother, great-grandmother and retired schoolteacher. There are so many positives to getting more kids outdoors and getting them familiar with sporting traditions.

This is a simple, visionary thing to do, which is going to help some specific young people. It will help their survival skills and problem-solving and give them self-confidence. It will teach them about the animals, habitats and ecosystems on which the animals depend, and it will give them the pride of helping provide

for their families. I know tags are the primary tool of wildlife management. This is a terrific opportunity to ensure those tags get used.

JOEL BLAKESLEE:

I am speaking for myself today. I am in support of both parts of the bill. I can speak about my own family. When it came time for my grandson to get his tag, my daughter took the class with him. Her husband and my other daughter and her husband talk about it every year, but they have never taken the class. So, it is my daughter and my grandson and me. The rest of the family say they want to take it, and maybe if they can take it online, they will eventually get around to it.

CHAIR PAZINA:

Our next order of business is public comment.

MS. BOEGER:

I am a retired teacher and I have some ideas and frustrations. You are the Senate Committee on Natural Resources, and Nevada being a public land State, it is my abiding hope this Committee will always closely examine each bill that comes before you with a lens of how this might impact, for good or ill, the health of our public lands. Every conservationist knows that every living thing, inclusive of our wildlife, depends on the health of those lands for their very lives. I view it as being part of your responsibility to try to bring education to the public, as well as to yourselves and all of us in the room who are listening to presentations, to consider the condition of the lands we all own together. I hope you will use every opportunity to invite the experts who have the responsibility and the ability to manage the land and wildlife to give you input about how they feel a bill is going to impact wildlife and to give you science-based information.

Also, I would like to see a video feed from Elko at every meeting so the people in eastern Nevada can, at the very least, provide their comments. I feel our rural populations do not have as much access to your ears as the rest of us. Today there was a missed opportunity in not having them join via live stream.

Senate Committee on Natural Resources
April 4, 2023
Page 23

SENATOR PAZINA:

With no public comment and having no further business, this meeting is adjourned at 5:09 p.m.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Donna Crawford Kennedy,
Committee Secretary

APPROVED BY:

Senator Julie Pazina, Chair

DATE: _____

. EXHIBIT SUMMARY				
Bill	Exhibit Letter	Introduced on Minute Report Page No.	Witness / Entity	Description
	A	1		Agenda
	B	1		Attendance Roster
S.B. 77	C	2	Alysa Keller	Work Session Document
S.B. 90	D	2	Alysa Keller	Work Session Document
S.B.176	E	4	Alysa Keller	Work Session Document
S.B.269	F	5	Alysa Keller	Work Session Document
S.J.R. 2	G	5	Alysa Keller	Work Session Document
S.J.R. 3	H	6	Alysa Keller	Work Session Document
S.B.159	I	7	Warren Hardy, Nevada Pest Management Association	Proposed Amendment
S.B. 224	J	14	Henry Krenka, Hidden Lake Outfitters	Letter of Support
S.B. 224	K	14	Chair Julie Pazina	Letter of Support Jim Cooney, Elko County Advisory Board to Manage Wildlife
S.B. 224	L	16	Chair Julie Pazina	Letter in Opposition Bryce Pollock, Nevada Chapter of Backcountry Hunters & Anglers
S.B. 224	M	16	Chair Julie Pazina	Letter in Opposition Tobi Tyler, Sierra Club Toiyabe Chapter
S.B. 224	N	16	Ryan Browné	Letter in Opposition
S.B. 311	O	18	Senator Ira Hansen	Number of people completing Hunter Safety Training 2010-2023

S.B. 311	P	21	Chair Pazina	Letter of Support Ryan Browné
S.B. 311	Q	21	Chair Pazina	Letter of Support Bryce Pollack, Nevada Chapter of Backcountry Hunters and Anglers