

Environment Committee Testimony Raised Bill 5316
Public Hearing Feb 24, 2016

Co-Chair: Senator Kennedy
Co-Chair: Representative Albis
Members of the Committee

I am writing to you to express my thoughts on Raised Bill No. 5316 **AN ACT CONCERNING SPORT FISHING LICENSES FOR ANGLERS WHO ARE SIXTY-FIVE YEARS OF AGE OR OLDER.**

I am in SUPPORT of Raised Bill 5316, with one reservation.

I relish and commend the State of Connecticut and Connecticut's Legislature in all of its laws, regulations and procedures that honor and celebrate our Senior Citizens. I am 67 years old. Thank you for that recognition, one I currently enjoy when obtaining my hunting and fishing license in the State of Connecticut and one that has been 'grandfathered' into this bill.

A little history. While growing up in the 50s and 60s, you'd go down to your town hall each year and get your hunting and fishing license. It was a fantastic honor that the State of Connecticut offered you a FREE license when you turned 65 years old. The license had a bold label on its top that read "**LIFETIME**". It was a cherished document, a permanent lifetime license to hunt and fish. When my father turned 65 and obtained his, he showed it off like it was a "winning lottery ticket". Free, but more valuable than the 'cost it saved'. As times changed and statistics on hunting and fishing became more necessary, a 'Lifetime' document was problematical for the DEEP. Without an annual issuance, the DEEP could not determine if the license was 'active', since when an individual passed away, no notice on the license's "end" could be understood. The consequence, DEEP could not include 'Lifetime' licenses in its statistics, so in essence it was forced to under-report the number of "active" license holders. A few years ago, with the introduction of the Online Sportsmen Licensing System, a simple solution was incorporated. A person 65 years old or older, could get their hunting and fishing licenses FREE OF CHARGE, but were asked to obtain them annually. With that statistical information, DEEP realized that out of over 165,000 fishing licenses issues, over 30,000 were 'free'. Recognizing that DEEP's Bureau of Natural Resources is largely supported by Connecticut's Sportsmen thru licenses, tags, permits, stamps and other fees, (including Federal excise taxes and State award via *Pitman-Roberson* and *Greenberg-Warburton*), I can understand the need and desire to look for reasonable avenues to increase those revenues within the budgets of DEEP that are 'designated and protected by Federal Law'. My point here is that DEEP and the CT Legislature, as they move in that direction with legislation such as H.B. 5316, should continue to recognize our "Seniors". This means, that while altering the 'free license' provision to help DEEP's revenue stream, H.B. 5316 should continue to recognize our "Seniors" and maintain the "FREE LICENSE" at 'some' increased age. I submit to you that making the age for a FREE LICENSE (for fishing), as 75 years old or more, is sufficiently respectful of our "Seniors" and at the same time balances a reasonable increase in revenues with a <new> charge for fishing licenses for "Seniors" between the ages of 65 and 75 years old, (or some other age you feel might continue such 'recognition of our Seniors').

Thank you for your time and thoughtful considerations on this proposed bill.

Bruce A. Tolhurst
16 Virginia Rail Dr.
Marlborough, CT 06447
860-295-0327