

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING
OF THE
ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES**

**Eighty-Second Session
June 3, 2023**

The Committee on Natural Resources was called to order by Chair Lesley E. Cohen at 3:41 p.m. on Saturday, June 3, 2023, in Room 3143 of the Legislative Building, 401 South Carson Street, Carson City, Nevada. The meeting was videoconferenced to Room 4401 of the Grant Sawyer State Office Building, 555 East Washington Avenue, Las Vegas, Nevada. Copies of the minutes, including the Agenda [[Exhibit A](#)], the Attendance Roster [[Exhibit B](#)], and other substantive exhibits, are available and on file in the Research Library of the Legislative Counsel Bureau and on the Nevada Legislature's website at www.state.nv.us/App/NELIS/REL/82nd2023.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Assemblywoman Lesley E. Cohen, Chair
Assemblywoman Natha C. Anderson, Vice Chair
Assemblywoman Shannon Bilbray-Axelrod
Assemblywoman Venicia Considine
Assemblyman Rich DeLong
Assemblywoman Bea Duran
Assemblyman Bert Gurr
Assemblywoman Alexis Hansen
Assemblywoman Selena La Rue Hatch
Assemblyman Howard Watts
Assemblyman Toby Yurek

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

Assemblywoman Tracy Brown-May (excused)

GUEST LEGISLATORS PRESENT:

Senator Ira Hansen, Senate District No. 14

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Nicolas Anthony, Committee Policy Analyst
Erin Sturdivant, Committee Legal Counsel
Connie Barlow, Committee Manager
Nancy Davis, Committee Secretary
Cheryl Williams, Committee Assistant

Minutes ID: 1349



OTHERS PRESENT:

Kyle Davis, representing Coalition for Nevada's Wildlife
Matthew Wilkie, Private Citizen

Chair Cohen:

[Roll was called.] I will open the bill hearing for Senate Bill 311 (1st Reprint) and welcome Senator Hansen.

Senate Bill 311 (1st Reprint): Revises provisions relating to wildlife. (BDR 45-168)

Senator Ira Hansen, Senate District No. 14:

This bill is a very basic bill. This bill came about because of a man named Rex Flowers. Rex was very influential in Washoe County and very active in the wildlife community. Unfortunately, Rex passed away two weeks ago. This bill was his baby. Essentially, the bill allows an adult who receives a big game hunting tag—antelope, elk, mule deer, and so forth—to give his tag to somebody who is under 18 years of age. The bill reads: "The Commission may adopt regulations establishing a program which authorizes a person to transfer his or her tag to hunt a big game mammal to any person who is under 18 years of age."

Originally, the "may" was "shall" and the Department of Wildlife (NDOW) put a fiscal note on it. In order to get it out of Senate Finance, we changed the "shall" to "may." That is the whole bill. There were a couple other sections which were amended out at the request of NDOW. I did not have anybody from NDOW come in to testify today, but they were supportive of this amended version in Senate Finance. That is the entire bill. Thank you.

Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod:

I do not get it. Why do we need to transfer to under 18-year-olds? I know we have done this in the past for people with disabilities. I think we had a bill last session. I just do not understand.

Ira Hansen:

Let me give you a simple example: This year I applied for tags. Assemblywoman Hansen has a nephew who was 15 years old and never had an opportunity to hunt, who also applied. Unfortunately, neither of us were successful. Let us say I was successful, and he was not, and he would like to hunt. At my age, honestly, I hunt now to be with my kids and grandkids and stuff like that. Right now, I am not allowed to legally transfer that tag to anybody. I am the only one who is allowed to use it. The Board of Wildlife Commissioners will be able to make policy changes to allow me, as an adult, to legally give that tag to, in this case, a 15-year-old young man who wants to hunt, does not come from a hunting background, but gives him the opportunity to be out in the field and go after big game. That is really the whole genesis behind the bill.

Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod:

That is what I was thinking. So, are you not sort of gaming the system? Because you are saying, I am not even going to hunt, but I will put in for a tag for you.

Senator Hansen:

I guess you could have something like that. That is for the Commission to set up some policies to try to prevent that. I think that would be very rare. Tags are becoming increasingly rare. There were actually over 425,000 applications this year for a complete allocation of only 18,000 tags in the entire state.

We have been trying aggressively to get younger people involved in outdoor sports. In every arena, we are seeing fewer and fewer young people getting outdoors. This is something that for guys like me who have a hunting tradition in the family, it is just a way of life. What we have noticed is there is an attrition factor and the actual age of people participating in outdoor sports, including hunting, fishing, and so forth is aging. There is less and less of a young component. The hope behind this, with Rex Flowers in particular, was to give somebody like me, who has won a tag, to share an opportunity to hunt with, in this case, a 15-year-old. Also, to encourage younger people to get out and participate in these types of activities.

Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod:

I thank you for that because it makes a big difference. I am not a hunter, I could not imagine hunting, but I am an environmentalist and I do understand what sportsmen do for our population. I like it because I am sure that is true for those under 18. My dad was not a hunter either, but I can see that. Thank you for saying it like that because I was not getting it.

Senator Hansen:

I think you will find that we share a common interest. I think you will find the sportsmen community has some of the most aggressive conservationists you will see anywhere. For decades, they have been putting their dollars where their mouths are and have really been instrumental in helping keep the game populations in Nevada going forward. We share a common bond in wanting to do things good for the environment.

Assemblyman Yurek:

Senator, thanks for coming and answering our questions on this highly concerning bill. I know how difficult it is to get, for example, a bull tag. I think the average is somewhere around 15 years. If, under this bill, I started putting in for a tag, and it took the average of 15 years, I started putting in when my kid was not even born yet. We get to 15 years, and I happen to get a tag and I want to take my 15-year-old out to go hunting with me. I love my kid to death, but I have been waiting 15 years. I want to take down this trophy bull, but just because my kid is a minor, I have to hand my rifle over to him and let him take the shot. Is that what your bill proposes?

Senator Hansen:

There is a legal question with your example. If somebody in my family is under 18 and I am going out with him, and he wants to hunt, it is currently illegal for me to allow him to, in the

scenario you were using. Let us say Assemblyman Yurek gets the tag and he goes out and he says, Look, you are 14, you have not gotten a tag, I am going to let you shoot my animal. That is a felony. It is a serious thing. To prevent that type of temptation, if you will, we could actually have somebody, in this scenario, legally transfer a tag to somebody under 18.

Assemblyman Yurek:

In all seriousness, I do want to go on to say that this is a great bill. Under that perfect scenario you are talking about, it encourages youth to get out. For example, if I had multiple deer tags over the course of my life and I did have a nephew or somebody come over or even one of my little kids, and I want to get them out there and involved, we are not increasing the number of tags that are available. We are not depleting our herds or anything. It is the same number of tags. I think this is a great bill, and I thank you for bringing it.

Assemblyman Gurr:

I want to say "ditto," but I also have a question. Why did they want to change it from "shall" to "may"?

Senator Hansen:

The Department of Wildlife put on a fiscal note of \$17,000 the first year and something similar the second year. I wanted "shall" because we have a similar program that Senator Titus put in a couple years ago and it really has not been aggressively implemented. We did go to "shall." Senator Titus is a cosponsor of the bill. Frankly, to get it out of Finance, you have to do what you have to do. To keep the bill alive, we got rid of "shall" and now it is "may."

Assemblyman Gurr:

I certainly hope we can make them do it. Rex Flowers is a friend of mine too, and this is a great bill for him.

Senator Hansen:

We have had extensive conversations with the new director of the Department of Wildlife, Mr. Jenne. Mr. Robb, the rural liaison for the Governor is also very much aware of this. There will also be several new appointments on the Wildlife Commission, and I think you will see this going forward very aggressively, assuming it passes.

Assemblywoman La Rue Hatch:

Could this be monetized? Could someone apply for a bunch of tags and then people who want to hunt with their kids pay to have those tags transferred to them?

Senator Hansen:

That is a very interesting question. First of all, the tag allocation process is very, very strict. The ability of somebody to apply and get multiple tags is almost unheard of; it is unheard of. As I said, in my family, I bet we had altogether over 25 applications and we got three tags.

The idea of getting multiple tags and then being able to sell them, I think that would be illegal under current law, and I would assume the Commission would also ensure that kind of illegal practice would remain illegal.

Assemblywoman La Rue Hatch:

I want to confirm that it does not have to be a family member. You could transfer to anybody as long as they are under 18.

Senator Hansen:

Correct.

Chair Cohen:

Just to confirm, we already have regulations about minors hunting and how they safely hunt. All that has already been put into regulation.

Senator Hansen:

If you are ages 14 to 18, a hunter in that age bracket has to be in the presence of an adult, which as I recall is 19 years old and up.

There are a lot of checks and balances in place to maximize safety. For the record, Nevada has not had serious issues with that in decades. The level of safety compared to the number of hunters is remarkably low. It is a very, very safe sport.

Assemblywoman Duran:

When you say transfer, is that just for a one-time thing, is it for the season, or is it a tag for life?

Senator Hansen:

The way the tag system works is you apply for a tag and there are seasons that are set up by the Wildlife Commission. For example, this year, I think the rifle mule deer season is October 5 through October 20. If you transferred a mule deer buck tag, the use of that tag would only be for one season and would be strictly limited to the week or two that the Wildlife Commission has set aside for that specific thing. It would not be year-round for these types of big game tags.

Assemblywoman Duran:

After you transfer your tag, do you have to reapply for another one, or would it automatically go back to you next season?

Senator Hansen:

I would have an opportunity to apply again the following season. There are some cases where they have extra tags left over, you can actually apply again, but that is almost unheard of now. I get one opportunity to have a tag, and if I transfer it, there is not an opportunity to apply for another tag in the same season. It is strictly a one-season arrangement.

Assemblywoman Considine:

My husband is a hunter, but it has been a while since he has gone hunting. If I remember properly, he would have a group, and they would all put in for tags. If one member of the group got a tag, then everyone in the group would get a tag. Does that still happen? Also, just for clarity, if you get a tag and something happens and you do not want to use it, what happens to it now? Does it go back into the lottery? What happens to that tag if you choose not to use it?

Senator Hansen:

To the first part of your question, yes, you are allowed to apply as a group. Some people still do that. The problem is, when applying as a group, everybody gets a tag, or nobody gets a tag. In some cases, families or different groups of people like to hunt together, and they will apply hoping everybody gets a tag. That has declined a little bit because of the reduction in tag numbers. Will you repeat your second question?

Assemblywoman Considine:

Because my husband has never given up his tag, what happens if you do not use it now?

Senator Hansen:

What happens now is, let us say I apply for a tag, but for whatever reason, I am not going to be able to hunt in October. I can turn that tag back into the Department of Wildlife, if I want, and they have a waiting list of people who are unsuccessful who then would get that tag. What would typically happen though, if I do not hunt, I just do not hunt, and the tag is not used. If I wait too long, and in September, two weeks before the hunt, I have got to go on a business trip out of state or something, and I miss that opportunity, the tag simply is not used. There is currently no way to turn it back in.

Assemblywoman Considine:

We had something like this come up last session and in the conversation I had with my husband, he was sure that he was opposed to this bill because everyone puts in for a tag and has an equal chance of getting a tag. If you get a tag and you do not use it, instead of it going back to other people who are still waiting for it, you bypass the whole system and give it to a chosen person. Is there a response to that?

Senator Hansen:

Your husband has a point. In my case, when my family applies and I am successful, I could give it to one of my grandsons. Currently that choice does not exist. Your husband does have a point. If this opportunity comes up there may be some people like me, honestly, I will apply and hopefully, if my grandkids do not get a tag or if my wife's nephew does not get one, I will be able to give them that opportunity. Because there are a limited number of tags, your husband is not entirely incorrect. I would bet, though, the way this will be set up with the Wildlife Commission, this will be fairly rare in application to try to make sure that everybody who applies does have some level of equality when it comes to the actual getting of the tags.

Assemblywoman La Rue Hatch:

I have a two-part question. I want to ask you the first part, and then I have a follow-up. The person you are transferring your tag to, is there a requirement that they had already applied for a tag and had been denied, or can you transfer to someone who has not applied at all?

Senator Hansen:

First of all, he would have to have a hunting license, and he would have to have passed hunter safety and received a hunter safety certificate. There is nothing yet. Remember, the Commission has to set up the regulations. There may be some regulations to say, if you are unsuccessful, you cannot have this transfer. This may be something for people who did not have an opportunity to apply. Right now, just so everybody knows, there is in the tag process what is called a youth hunt and a disproportionate number of tags go to youths already. There may not be a lot of these transfers. Two of my grandsons got a tag and nobody else did, and they were in that youth category. As far as how the Commission structures this, that is probably one of the questions they would address. This is very generic and broad. All this is going to do is give them the ability to set up the regulatory framework to make this process work. Undoubtedly that will be one of the things they will need to address.

Assemblywoman La Rue Hatch:

The second part of my question is, are we creating an entitlement for young people who already have an advantage? With this, they do not even have to put in the work that their parents put in and they are riding on their parent's coattails to get a tag?

Senator Hansen:

That is a very good point. I would say yes, we are trying to get young people involved. As Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod asked, I am definitely trying to give young people an advantage. That does not mean that the Wildlife Commission will structure it that way. The whole intent of this bill is to get more young people into these sports. Guys like me, at 62, might get the tag and when an opportunity like a 15-year-old comes along, not even necessarily a family member, I would love to give him an advantage in law and give me a chance to do it. By the way, that was Rex Flowers' whole intent. He was definitely wanting to encourage younger people into the sport. There is an advantage now, and we may give them a slightly greater advantage, which I hope the Wildlife Commission will do.

Chair Cohen:

I think it does make sense to have the people going out when they are younger and their parents are there supervising, as opposed to someone who is 18, who has never participated in the hunt before, and suddenly decides, I am going to go out and hunt. He would have the hunter safety training we require, but he has not learned a lot out in the field. He is not getting the hands-on training with having a parent or other close friend or relative there who is supervising.

Assemblywoman Hansen:

I view this as a mentoring thing. We do this in a lot of other spheres with youth. I think because we had a situation, although that is not the reason for the bill, we see there are youth out there who do not have the opportunity because maybe they do not have a dad who hunts, maybe they do not have a dad who is involved, or a brother or sister who is really into hunting. There are youth out there, and I think Mr. Flowers understood that this is an opportunity to mentor, whether it is an actual family member, it is an opportunity. I know in high school, Senator Hansen, you had that opportunity with a beloved teacher of ours who took you out hunting a lot because your dad was busy working. Could you elaborate a little bit more about Mr. Flowers' vision? Why this even came up, and maybe when did it come up?

Senator Hansen:

I think Assemblywoman Hansen's point is better stated; this is a mentor concept. I just use the family example because, obviously, we have a very large family. For a lot of people, they may have a neighbor kid who is disadvantaged, underprivileged, or does not have opportunities to go out. There are a lot of people who mentor kids like that, and they may enjoy hunting and fishing and they want to do something positive with a younger person. This would simply give, in a mentor state, an opportunity to do something like that. Someone may have an interest in hunting and he applies for a tag and there is a kid down the street who expressed an interest, and he has done the hunter safety thing, but he does not have a father in his life or whatever, this would be an opportunity for somebody like Mr. Flowers, who did similar things like that, to be able to help a young person, male or female, to go out and experience the great outdoors in the state of Nevada.

Chair Cohen:

Seeing no other questions, I will move on to support.

Kyle Davis, representing Coalition for Nevada's Wildlife:

We are here in support of this bill. As you have heard in Senator Hansen's testimony, as a former member of the Wildlife Coalition, Mr. Flowers was instrumental in working with Senator Hansen on bringing this concept forward. I just want to talk a little bit about why it is so important that we work to get youth involved in hunting, fishing, and all outdoor activities and the importance of wildlife conservation. One reason is the awareness. We find that people who actually have experience outdoors and are able to participate in these types of activities have a greater appreciation for the importance of protecting wildlife habitat, the importance of clean water, and the importance of healthy lands. That is the thing that you really gain an appreciation for when you are out in the field. When you are trying to figure out where the animals are. If I were a deer, or if I were an elk, where would I be on this landscape? It really gives a great appreciation for Nevada's environment and for the importance of protecting these areas, for wildlife species. That is one reason, and that is obviously great when you can learn that as a youth.

The other reason that I point to, and I think this Committee is certainly well aware, but the way we fund wildlife conservation in this state and really in North America is through the North American Model for Wildlife Conservation, where a lot of that funding comes from. The funds that are expended for these types of things: tag applications, hunting licenses, and excise taxes on guns and ammunition. All of that money goes to fund these conservation efforts. The Department of Wildlife puts that money on the ground for the protection of wildlife habitat, increasing opportunities for hunting, and increasing our wildlife populations. Those are just two of the main reasons why we think it is so important to make sure we are getting youth involved in hunting. We think this bill is another step we can take to make sure we are passing on these traditions to the next generation and passing on the ethic of wildlife conservation.

Chair Cohen:

Seeing no one else in support in Carson City and Las Vegas, is there anyone on the phone?

Matthew Wilkie, Private Citizen:

Many people who know me politically may be surprised that I grew up hunting and fishing in southern Oregon. This bill brings me back to a story that my father told me growing up. On opening day of hunting season 1987, my mother went into early labor and was forced to give birth to me. My dad would always remind me how my being born early prevented my mother from using her tag that year. I think this is a bill that would maybe prevent that from happening going forward.

Chair Cohen:

Is there anyone else on the phone in support? Hearing no one, is there anyone in opposition in Carson City or Las Vegas? Seeing no one, is there anyone on the phone? Hearing no one, is there anyone in Carson City or Las Vegas in neutral? Seeing no one, is there anyone on the phone? Hearing no one, would Senator Hansen like to make a final statement?

Senator Hansen:

Thank you for the hearing today.

Chair Cohen:

I will close the hearing on Senate Bill 311 (R1). We are now going to go into a work session for Senate Bill 311 (1st Reprint).

[Senate Bill 311 \(1st Reprint\)](#): Revises provisions relating to wildlife. (BDR 45-168)

Nicolas Anthony, Committee Policy Analyst:

Before the Committee this afternoon is Senate Bill 311 (1st Reprint), sponsored by Senators Hansen, Titus, and Goicoechea, et al. Senate Bill 311 (1st Reprint) authorizes the Board of Wildlife Commissioners to adopt regulations to allow a person to transfer his or her tag to hunt a big game mammal to any person who is under 18 years of age [[Exhibit C](#)]. There are no amendments.

Chair Cohen:

Committee, are there any questions? Seeing none, I will take a motion to do pass Senate Bill 311 (1st Reprint).

ASSEMBLYWOMAN HANSEN MADE A MOTION TO DO PASS
SENATE BILL 311 (1ST REPRINT).

ASSEMBLYMAN GURR SECONDED THE MOTION.

Is there any discussion on the motion?

Assemblywoman Bilbray-Axelrod:

I am going to vote this out of Committee, and I am probably going to vote for it on the floor as well, but I do hope there are no unintended consequences. I do trust the Commission, and I am happy that it is a "may" and not "shall." I want to get that on the record.

Assemblywoman Considine:

I, too, have concerns that this could potentially increase the chances of one person getting a tag if there is a family of hunters who really want their son to get that tag, and they all put in with no intention of using the tag. If one of them gets a tag, it goes to their son. I will vote it out of Committee, but I have some concerns that I need to think over.

Assemblyman Gurr:

I understand the concerns, and I think they are valid. It is not going to happen. Tags are so rare that at my age of 75, if I draw a bull tag, I will be damned if my kid is going to shoot that bull. It is not going to happen, no matter how old he is, or I am, if I draw a bull tag in the state of Nevada, he is not going to get it. Nor is my daughter or my grandsons or anybody else; it is my tag. I have been putting in for five years to get a deer tag. Of course, if I never get another tag, I have had enough. Maybe at 80 I will consider passing it on, but not yet. I think the program is wonderful. I think it helps get rid of some illegality that is out there right now. We did not bring that up, but it goes on. I think this is a great program.

Chair Cohen:

Seeing no other comments, we will vote.

THE MOTION PASSED. (ASSEMBLYWOMAN BROWN-MAY WAS
ABSENT FOR THE VOTE.)

I will assign the floor statement to Assemblyman McArthur. That brings our work session to a close, and I will go into public comment. Is there anyone in Carson City or Las Vegas wishing to provide public comment? Seeing no one, is there anyone on the phone? Hearing no one, I will close public comment. We are scheduled for hearings for the rest of session. I do not know if we are going to get anything. I think it is likely we will not, but just stay tuned. We are in recess [at 4:14 p.m.].

[Chair Cohen adjourned the meeting on the floor of the Assembly at 7:55 p.m.]

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Nancy Davis
Committee Secretary

APPROVED BY:

Assemblywoman Lesley E. Cohen, Chair

DATE: _____

EXHIBITS

[Exhibit A](#) is the Agenda.

[Exhibit B](#) is the Attendance Roster.

[Exhibit C](#) is the Work Session Document for [Senate Bill 311 \(1st Reprint\)](#), submitted and presented by Nicolas Anthony, Committee Policy Analyst, Research Division, Legislative Counsel Bureau.