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Natural Resources Committee
January 26, 2011

[LB41 LB421]

The Committee on Natural Resources met at 1:30 p.m. on Wednesday, January 26, 2011, in Room 1525 of the State Capitol, Lincoln, Nebraska, for the purpose of conducting a public hearing on LB41, and LB421. Senators present: Chris Langemeier, Chairperson; Ken Schilz, Vice Chairperson; Tom Carlson; Mark Christensen; Annette Dubas; Ken Haar; Beau McCoy; and Jim Smith. Senators absent: None. []

SENATOR LANGEMEIER: Good afternoon and welcome to the Natural Resources Committee. I'd like to welcome everyone here in the audience and those that are watching us on the Internet and also the closed captioned within the building and on some television stations. Welcome to the Natural Resources Committee. My name is Chris Langemeier, I'm the Chairman of the committee. I'd like to start off by introducing our members. And we have a number of members that have bills up that they're introducing in other committees so you'll see them come and go as the day goes on. We'll start to my far left, we have Senator Jim Smith from Papillion. Senator Haar and Senator Christensen will be with us shortly. We have Senator Ken Schilz, is the Vice Chairman of the committee from Ogallala, Nebraska. We have Laurie Lage who is the legal counsel for the Natural Resources Committee. And then to my right, we have Senator Dubas will be here after she gets done with her bill in Judiciary. And then we have Senator Tom Carlson from Holdrege, Nebraska. And we have Senator Beau McCoy from Omaha. Then at the end of the counter we have Barb Koehlmoos who is the committee clerk. And you'll...as you come up, you'll provide your information to them. Senator Haar and Senator Christensen have now joined us. We have today, we have our one page today; some days we have more, Kate DeLashmutt who is a senior at UNL and she is from Burwell, Nebraska. She'll be helping you if you have something to hand out. At this time we ask that if you have anything you want to hand out that you 12 copies of it. If you know right now you don't have 12 copies, please raise your hand and Kate will be over to help you with that and make sure you have enough copies. We also tell you if you have something for us that you would like to hand out, once you give it to us it becomes part of the permanent record. So if it's something you actually wanted to keep, a photo or something, we ask that you show it to us from the testifier's table, but keep it in your possession because once it comes to us it becomes part of the permanent record. For those of you that care to testify today, in the corners of the room you'll see these green sheets. We ask that you fill these out, when you come up to testify please give it to Barb. It allows us to keep a more clear and accurate record of today's hearings. There's also a sheet in the corner if you want to be in the record as being here and have a position in support or opposition to a bill, but you don't care to testify, there's also that sheet for you to sign in in the corner. We appreciate that. At this time we would ask that you turn your cell phones off in respect to our testifiers, we have their complete attention, as well as the committee's as we move forward. As you come up to testify in the Natural Resources Committee, we do use the lights. We allow five minutes of testimony. You'll have a green light for four minutes of your time; then when

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the yellow light comes on you'll have one minute remaining and when the red light goes on we ask that you conclude so we can then...open yourself up for questions to the committee. And with that said, we ask that one other thing, is when you come up with us is that you state and spell your name first thing you do. That helps us also make a good transcribing record of this hearing today. So with that we will open up our first hearing. Senator Hadley is here with LB41. And welcome to the Natural Resources Committee. []

SENATOR HADLEY: (Exhibit 1, Exhibit 2) Senator Langemeier, members of the Natural Resources Committee, my name is Galen Hadley, G-a-l-e-n H-a-d-l-e-y. I represent the 37th District; it is an honor. This is my first time before the Natural Resources and I've been told that it is an articulate, intelligent, superb committee so I'm very happy to be here to interchange dialogue with you. I am here with LB41 and this is a bill that I've...we've worked with the Game, Fish and Parks, and basically we would call it kind of their annual bill to look at their rules, regulations and statutes and make the changes that they feel are appropriate. The first thing, I will quickly go through the changes and we will have testifiers behind me that will be able to answer more in detail exactly if you have questions. The first one is a change in the controlled shooting area. It changes the size requirements and moves much of the statutory requirements to commission regulation. Secondly, the change in falconry statutes; harmonize the state and federal requirements in light of the federal permit not being required any more. Also it creates a nonresident falconer's permit. Third, we have the elk permit limitations change, clarify eligibility for elk lottery or auction permit for persons having previously obtained a bull-elk tag. Fourth, change a two-day nonresident small game hunting license to allow year-round purchase. Five, change the statutes regarding permitting for take of beaver and muskrat causing damage. Simplify requirements for individuals, agencies, and municipalities to obtain permits to take beaver and muskrat which are causing damage to property. Six, change to simplify statutory requirements on holding legally harvested furs. Seven, change to clarify a statute in regards to illegal possession of unmounted game. Eight, change to current hunting and angling statute to provide better benefits to our currently and recently deployed military residents. Language would provide for low-cost combo hunt/fish permits with stamps. And I'll take a moment just to explain that. That was the reason that I really got involved with this particular bill, is that I had a constituent who had a son that was in the National Guard and was sent to Iraq and he came home on his two-week leave during the middle of his tour over there and the way our statutes are written now, he had to buy a full year's hunting and fishing to use to fish during that period of time that he wanted to. So I met with Director Amack and to try and change it so that this person could get the benefits of a military type of permit for the short period that they would be home during their year deployment. I did talk to the National Guard and it is very common for them to get a two-week kind of furlough at some time during their deployment to Iraq or Afghanistan. Number nine, statute changes to enable monthly year stamp sales. Statutory authority currently exists to provide monthly year permits, but additional statutory authority is needed to create and provide monthly year stamps we use in conjunctions with such permits. The fiscal note

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actually had a cash fund revenue loss of about \$5,671 annually because of these changes. With that, I would be happy to...also there was an amendment, I believe, that's been handed out to you. If you have any questions, I would be able...or hope to be able to answer them. If not, the people behind me can certainly answer them. [LB41]

SENATOR LANGEMEIER: Thank you, Senator Hadley. Are there questions? Senator Christensen. [LB41]

SENATOR CHRISTENSEN: Thank you, Chairman. Senator Hadley, am I understanding this correctly that you want to add an extra fishing permit for temporary in the same bill, at the same time as eliminating a special two-day permit for hunting...let's see, it says, related to the permit fees eliminated discretion two-day permit between Thanksgiving and December, why are we doing...shortening one and lengthening one, I guess, it just seemed inconsistent? [LB41]

SENATOR HADLEY: I think it might be best to ask the next person behind me. [LB41]

SENATOR CHRISTENSEN: Okay. I can do that. [LB41]

SENATOR LANGEMEIER: Senator Carlson. [LB41]

SENATOR CARLSON: Thank you, Senator Langemeier. Senator Hadley, I think it would be helpful to the committee, would you give a brief summary of raptor law in Nebraska? (laughter) [LB41]

SENATOR HADLEY: It could be very brief. (laughter) How brief would you like it, Senator? [LB41]

SENATOR CARLSON: That was just fine, thank you. (laughter) [LB41]

SENATOR LANGEMEIER: Senator Haar. [LB41]

SENATOR HAAR: I also have a question. Does this expand trapping in ditches? (laughter) [LB41]

SENATOR HADLEY: No, I...Senator Haar, I thought about that when we were getting down to the part that talked about taking of beaver and muskrat causing damages, I immediately thought of trapping in ditches. I did think of that. [LB41]

SENATOR CHRISTENSEN: I would support that. [LB41]

SENATOR HAAR: I do have a serious question, though. [LB41]

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SENATOR HADLEY: Yes. [LB41]

SENATOR HAAR: In the...what does it mean by clarifying no person may have in their possession any unmounted game except during open season? What is unmounted game? I don't know what the term means. [LB41]

SENATOR HADLEY: My understanding of that is mounted would be to put it on a plaque or a board, or such as that, that you would hang on your wall like you would mount a fish or mount the head of a deer or an elk, so that would be the mounted. [LB41]

SENATOR HAAR: Okay. Okay, thank you. [LB41]

SENATOR LANGEMEIER: Any other questions? Seeing none, thank you very much. [LB41]

SENATOR HADLEY: Thank you. I will... [LB41]

SENATOR LANGEMEIER: Stick around for closing. [LB41]

SENATOR HADLEY: ...stick around, I may not close, but I will... [LB41]

SENATOR LANGEMEIER: Okay. Google raptors. [LB41]

SENATOR HADLEY: Yes, I will Google raptors. [LB41]

SENATOR LANGEMEIER: We'll start... [LB41]

SENATOR HADLEY: Oh, you mean you allow...oh never mind. [LB41]

SENATOR LANGEMEIER: We don't go there. You've heard the opening on LB41. We will now move to proponents, those wishing to testify in support of LB41. Welcome to the Natural Resources Committee. [LB41]

JAMES N. DOUGLAS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. My name is James N. Douglas, J-a-m-e-s N. D-o-u-g-l-a-s. I serve as the deputy director for the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission and I'm here to speak in favor the bill, LB41, and to answer what questions I can. With the initial limitation on time, I wanted to concentrate on the aspects that I think that are consistent with every one of the changes that are proposed and that is that in every case we're responding to constituency requests. I would say, however, in the case of multiple year permits and multiple year stamps, it's actually based on survey work that we did with our constituents. But, for example, in the controlled shooting area statutes, all of the provisions that are in this bill

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are ones that have been discussed with many of the controlled shooting area operators and are responding to changes that they asked for. Primarily, changes are designed to allow expansion, to allow flexibility, and to allow for less record keeping. And also to allow for flexibility in the future as conditions change to promulgate some of the more minor rules such as signage and so on, to be done by the rule and reg of our commission with negotiation with those persons that hold CSA statutes. Likewise, with falconry statutes, two elements come into play in asking for changes. One is change in federal administration of falconry rules. There will no longer be a federal falconry permit required. There will be sideboards that the federal government still places upon states for their state regulation of falconry. So within the context of those sideboards, we needed to harmonize our statutes. And in doing so, we consulted with the falconers in the state to see what other changes they might desire. For example, they actually asked for a nonresident collector permit because there is a reciprocity agreement with some other states, and if we do not allow the collection of falcons and raptors in Nebraska, then our falconers couldn't go to Iowa or some other state to do their collecting. Elk permit limitation changes, currently there's one statute that requires that a person may obtain only a one bull elk permit. But there are other statutes that allow for lottery permits and auction permits for elk and some other species, and it says in that place in statute that the game commission can provide the rules and regulations of who is eligible. We want to harmonize those two provisions and make it possible for somebody who has already obtained a bull elk permit through the regular drawing to also permit in a special lottery or auction permit if they so desire to. The two-day nonresident small game hunting permit extension is something that people have asked the Game and Parks Commission to look into. Originally, the thought on our two-day permit was that we would have this available for a short time in the year, during the holidays for example, because we didn't want to have too many people who were currently coming in as nonresidents, switch to this two-day permit because they like to come in on opening weekend. However, the number of days that people hunt in Nebraska is going down on small game. At one point it was an average of four days; it's closer to three days now. It makes it easier for us to decide to make this change. As you heard, it is anticipated we may have a slight decrease in revenue from this, \$5,000. However, it is possible that might be made up if we attract more hunters with this change. The statutes permitting take of beaver and muskrat are very...are statutes that were promulgated many years ago. They have a lot of very specific requirements that I think are...we think are onerous. We have actually been asked by the power districts to update statutes regarding this because the reporting requirements currently in the law require them to make monthly reports for beavers and muskrats that they take off of permits that we issue to them. Likewise, fur harvesting has changed to the extent a lot of people sell their furs by auction in Canada, for example. They need to hold their furs longer than they did many years ago, and right now without a change, they have to get a permit every ten days past the season to hold furs. So again, these are changes that people have asked for; the trappers have asked us to make changes to this. Clarification on unmounted game, the statute that is proposed to be amended, actually, was enacted

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many years ago and currently does not adequately allow for the keeping of game other than mounted game, past hunting season. We actually want to make sure that people can keep legally acquired game past the hunting season. So it's actually a technical issue that needs to be corrected in our minds. The multiple-year stamps, currently we can issue multiple-year permits. We have that authority right now, but in recent...we haven't been issuing multiple-year permits, but recent survey work that we did indicates that there's a good demand for something like a two-day annual permit or a three-day...excuse me, a two-year or a three-year annual hunting or fishing permit. And if we want to do that, we need to be able to issue the appropriate stamps at the same time that would go with that. With that, I think I would cease my initial comments and be open to any questions you might have. [LB41]

SENATOR LANGEMEIER: Before we do that, you've done a good job going through all the sections in this. Would you jump to Sections 16 through 22 and give us a little briefing on the licensing of game birds and controlled shooting areas. [LB41]

JAMES N. DOUGLAS: Yes. [LB41]

SENATOR LANGEMEIER: That's another big area of change in here that you didn't really get to, if you would, and then we'll go to questions, if you'd give us a little more on that. [LB41]

JAMES N. DOUGLAS: Okay, sure. Okay. The majority of controlled shooting area statutes that are currently in affect were written, I think, back in about 1957. And in those times, I think the statutes were designed, it appears, to sort of try to protect the game that wasn't contained on the controlled shooting areas. On the controlled shooting areas people can hunt from September through March. They release birds on these areas, but there's also wild birds that are on these areas. So they're effectively shooting both released birds, if they have the right habitat, and if there's wild birds in the area and released birds. So, they're quite restrictive statutes making sure that you kept really rigorous records about what you released, had a pretty high threshold of what you had to release as a minimum number of birds and so on. Some things have changed. And in many parts of the state, unfortunately, sometimes the best habitat is actually on the controlled shooting area and there are very few wild birds in the general vicinity. So with that in mind, I think the controlled shooting area operators asked us to take another look at these statutes and make sure that they weren't overly onerous. Also, the...there's a currently a limitation on the size of controlled shooting areas, but not a limitation on the number of licenses that an individual or entity may have. So some entities have multiple licenses because of the size limitation. By expanding the sizes that are allowed, it would allow, I think, 90 percent of the current 85 controlled shooting area operators to consolidate their licenses into one license. It would save them record keeping. It would save them money. It wouldn't, I don't think, matter to the natural resources that were originally trying to be protected by the statutes that are in place. Apparently in earlier

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days, a lot of statutes in the game law were written with great specificity in putting things into statutes such as the distance between signs and some very minor details about regulation that we believe would be better off in the rules and regulations of the commission because we could respond to changing times and changing conditions. Likewise for bird-marking requirements, transport, record keeping and so on. And another large change that would be accomplished if this would become law would be that, currently, the distance between two different controlled shooting areas can be no more than two miles by the rules and regulations of the commission. We currently place that at one mile. But all of the tracts of ground that are contained within one license, currently have to touch each other, be contiguous. And we would propose that that's not necessary and especially in light of wanting them...to allow them to be able to consolidate their holdings into one license, we would say that any individual tract under the same license could be no farther than two miles from each other. [LB41]

SENATOR LANGEMEIER: Very good. Thank you. I thought that was a big component of your bill. Senator Haar. [LB41]

SENATOR HAAR: A constituent asked me the other day if Nebraska allows canned hunting? And I...he explained a little bit what that meant, but do we allow it and just talk real briefly about that. [LB41]

JAMES N. DOUGLAS: Most often people that use the term canned hunting are most often referring to high-fence hunting of big game, large animals, ungulates, deer, exotics and so on behind fence, whereas, controlled shooting areas are primarily bird hunting. [LB41]

SENATOR HAAR: Okay. Do we allow the high-fence hunting? [LB41]

JAMES N. DOUGLAS: It is allowed under Nebraska statute. There's some joint authorities in what's called the Cervidae Act in state Department of Agriculture law between the Department of Agriculture and Game and Parks. For the most part, the activities behind the fenced operations are controlled by the regulations and statutes associated with the state Department of Agriculture. [LB41]

SENATOR HAAR: So we do allow that? [LB41]

JAMES N. DOUGLAS: Uh-huh. [LB41]

SENATOR HAAR: Okay. [LB41]

SENATOR LANGEMEIER: Any other questions? Senator Christensen. [LB41]

SENATOR CHRISTENSEN: Thank you, Chairman. What is the...in raising this cap on

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the nonresident two-day hunting permit from 35 to 55, are you guys at your cap 35 now? Is that the reason we're raising this? [LB41]

JAMES N. DOUGLAS: We're proposing to raise it because in deciding whether or not a two-day license makes sense from a fiscal standpoint for the commission, we have to look at how many days people are hunting right now on a full permit. So, for example, a nonresident permit to hunt pheasants in Nebraska costs a nonresident \$80. Okay. And if most of those people only hunt two days, and we then charge \$35 for a license that could be used anytime during the year, then we'd have a lot of negative fiscal impact to that. If...so we actually looked at that and studied it very closely on how many people hunt four days on average, three, two, and so on. But this is an expansion of opportunity. Currently, they can only choose these two days from the Wednesday before Thanksgiving until the end of the year; it's only 40 days. Under our proposal they could choose those two days anytime throughout the whole year. And the \$55 would cause us to probably lose \$5,000, which we're willing to do to try to make it more convenient for people and to accommodate those people that do want to come just for a weekend or so on. But if we would lower that...as we lower that, our fiscal...negative fiscal impact gets higher. [LB41]

SENATOR CHRISTENSEN: One more question. In Section 37-490 where you added the words "except that turkeys may be hunted throughout the whole open season" instead of just September 1 and April 1, what is the length of turkey season then? [LB41]

JAMES N. DOUGLAS: Runs until the end of May. [LB41]

SENATOR CHRISTENSEN: Goes to end of May. Okay. Thank you. [LB41]

SENATOR LANGEMEIER: Are there any other questions? Seeing none, thank you very much for your testimony. Further testimony in support of LB41? Seeing...oh, come on up. Don't be shy. I about skipped over you. Welcome. [LB41]

JOE HERROD: Welcome. I mean, thank you. [LB41]

SENATOR LANGEMEIER: It's nice to be welcomed. [LB41]

JOE HERROD: My name is Joe Herrod, J-o-e H-e-r-r-o-d and I'm here today representing the Nebraska Council of Sportsmen's Clubs and probably the only person that hasn't seen me before is Senator Smith. The rest of you are used to me and you know that I really don't need these lights because usually I get through real quick. I have had the pleasure today of seeing all three of my senators. I have Senator Schilz. I have...he's kind of my senator out west. And so Senator Hansen. And I was down seeing Senator Wallman today. And it's always a pleasure to be here. And the

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Sportsmen Council...kind of wished we would have had these lights yesterday when Jim went through this bill for us because he took a lot longer than five minutes. But anyway, we totally support this and any questions? [LB41]

SENATOR LANGEMEIER: Are there any questions? There is some method to our madness. Seeing no questions, thank you very much. [LB41]

JOE HERROD: Thank you. [LB41]

SENATOR LANGEMEIER: Appreciate it. Further testimony in support? Don't be shy, come on up. Welcome. [LB41]

TERRY KRIZ: Thank you. I appreciate this opportunity. My name is Terry Kriz, T-e-r-r-y K-r-i-z and I represent one of the owners of Oak Creek Sporting Club, just a little north and west of here by Brainard, and also vice president of the Nebraska Gamebird Associations. I guess I want to take the time to say thank you for this opportunity. Reading through this, we've been working on this as an association for many years and we're very much in favor of this. We're an operation that part of the continuous acres tract has affected over the ten years we've been in business. We currently have two CSA licenses, permits 87 and 184. And the reason we have that is because we have property two miles, not quite two miles apart and for the last ten years we've been doing two sets of books, two sets of permits. When we bring our...our business from out of state has grown the last few years and as hunters come in and come for two and three days spells, currently we are forced to sell them a permit for 87 and if they see our property and want to hunt a different tract that is on the other side, we have to sell them a secondary permit. And it has caused a lot of negativity from out-of-state hunters saying why should I come to Oak Creek and hunt two different properties. And putting this together within two miles would be a great asset to us. And also for expansion, because currently some of our ground to eliminate adding a third or even a fourth CSA so that we can add acres, we've had to lease ground between tracts to try to keep everything touching. So it will help us out immensely there on the book side of things and also the permits. On the secondary part, we lease right now currently right at our limit of 1,250 acres, due to some of the fact of trying to keep everything continuous, adding new acres and increasing the percentage would help us in growth. And relating to the turkey side, currently the spring season, as we talked a little bit ago, does extend through May. All the ground that we lease...what we own and what we leave from neighbors, technically we have to tell them you can only hunt turkeys until March 31 due to the turkeys being a game bird. And that has caused a little bit of friction with some of the landowners saying, you know, we'll lease you the ground, we want to enhance this, but if we can't hunt turkeys, which is becoming a large population in our area, it did limit some opportunity for us to have. One thing I'd like to bring up on that, page 29, lines 2 through 5 that relate to that...the issue with the turkeys. Currently, in a CSA we are not allowed, outside of our seven-month season, to run dogs on birds. And I guess, if...one

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change that I would like to see in that, is allowing us, you know, currently right now with our 1,250 acres, we lease ground around us, for me in June or July to get my dogs ready for the season, I have to drive two or three miles and ask a neighbor can I run my dogs on your ground and train because I'm not allowed to do that on my own property, anything that is leased. Expanding the turkey season helps on the turkey side, but I currently on a CSA license, you cannot release any game birds outside of that 7seven-month season in order to work a dog. And I know the discussion of that is that technically you could hunt seven months...or 12 months a year, but for training dogs and working my own dogs getting ready for the upcoming September season, it does limit us very much on that side of it. And other than that small piece, I guess I appreciate all those that have put effort forth on this because it will be a great asset to the CSAs across the state and I thank you for your time. Any questions for me? [LB41]

SENATOR LANGEMEIER: Very good. Are there any questions? Senator Haar. [LB41]

SENATOR HAAR: Yes. What is the cost of a CSA license? [LB41]

TERRY KRIZ: Currently the cost of...you must buy a CSA license and a habitat stamp... [LB41]

SENATOR HAAR: Okay. [LB41]

TERRY KRIZ: ...and that is \$33. So if a hunter would come and hunt for multiple days and switch, what we call a CSA for Oak Creek, it would cost them \$66. [LB41]

SENATOR HAAR: Okay. What do you have to pay for your license to even have the CSA or isn't there a separate license? [LB41]

TERRY KRIZ: We pay an annual fee, I believe it's \$149.50 per CSA and that's just an annual fee to the Game and Parks on that side. [LB41]

SENATOR HAAR: So the amount of money is pretty small, it's just all the hassle of extra book work and stuff. [LB41]

TERRY KRIZ: The money on our side, I mean truly, is not an issue. I mean, it's just a matter...when I go out and buy...I bring in, say, 1,200, 1,500 pheasants. They ask me as they deliver them, is this CSA 87 or 184? And I'm putting them in a pen. I hate to tell you, where that bird goes I don't know until we release them, you know. So it...I keep two separate books. The book work is a hassle. It's not a monetary issue as far as Oak Creek is concerned. The issue on the permit would go to me drawing out-of-state hunters multiple days. I say if you want to hunt this property or this way, you can't go both unless you pay \$66 instead of \$33. [LB41]

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SENATOR HAAR: Okay. Good. Thanks. [LB41]

SENATOR LANGEMEIER: Are there any other questions? Seeing none, thank you very much, well done. [LB41]

TERRY KRIZ: Thank you for your time. [LB41]

SENATOR LANGEMEIER: Further testimony in support of LB41? Good afternoon. [LB41]

KIM SNOW: Good afternoon. Thank you for your time. My name is Kim Snow, it's K-i-m S-n-o-w. I own K-D gamebird farm in Tekamah, Nebraska, and I'm also the president of the Nebraska Gamebird and Hunting Association. On behalf of the association, I am here in support of LB41. And I would like to thank the Game and Parks personnel too for their hard work on this and their cooperation also with our association. We have a real good, solid relationship in working together and I appreciate that. And the only thing on it I would like to discuss is what Terry just made comments on is page 29, line 2 through 5; it's the same thing. And I spoke to Jim Douglas a little while ago and if we would have had more time I think this would probably have been resolved, but I would like to discuss an amendment to allow field trials to be able to be held on these controlled shooting areas from April 1 through September 1 during the time we're normally closed. And the way we would do this is have to have a special permit for that day or two days, however long this field trial was, from the Game and Parks which is their procedure already now. They can be held on public ground; they can be held on private ground. The CSAs would just be excluded at this point, where we would like to be able to have them included and...so that we could hold field trials on this ground during off season. These CSAs are generally properly managed and already "personneled" and have the habitat and prime locations for field trials. I'm not sure how we would accomplish that, but...and Jim could probably share something on that. And then the other part of that is, what Terry says, is to be able to train our dogs on this property because right now as an owner I can have a kennel with dogs that need to be trained and stuff during the five-month summer season and I can't even take them on our own property and do that. So we would like that amendment to include that to where we could. And there is the problem with that is it could be taken advantage of with operations that want to all of a sudden have a 12-month CSA and take advantage of it and run...have all their clients come up and shoot birds all year. And so...but if we could limit that to the owner of being able to train his own dogs or something to be able to work out that situation we're more than willing to make it so people comply with the laws and don't take advantage of it. I just don't have the answer to that right now. But that's basically all I have. And if there's any questions. [LB41]

SENATOR LANGEMEIER: Very good. Are there any questions? Senator Haar. [LB41]

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SENATOR HAAR: Field trials, what does that mean? [LB41]

KIM SNOW: That's when an organization with dogs, for instance the English Springer Spaniel Club of America, whatever, gets all their guys together and takes all their springers and competes for titles for their dogs. They say put three birds out and then they have judges and scores and the dog gets a score and it gets a champion title or that's what their goal is. And they have these all over, all over, all countries, but our locations are prime for that and we have to tell these people no, we can't do that because we're closed. They have to find another location. And most the time we do have the facilities, the lodges, you know, the camper hookups, and really nice facilities for them to be able to...but we can't accommodate them right now. [LB41]

SENATOR HAAR: Okay. And then the Nebraska Gamebird Association, is that for hunters or is it for the people that operate? [LB41]

KIM SNOW: We...our members are controlled shooting area owners, kennel owners... [LB41]

SENATOR HAAR: Okay. Okay. [LB41]

KIM SNOW: ...hunting outfitters. [LB41]

SENATOR HAAR: Gotcha. Okay, thank you. [LB41]

SENATOR LANGEMEIER: Senator Schilz. [LB41]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Thank you, Senator Langemeier. Thanks for coming in today. Just to get back on the subject of field trials, I just want to make sure everybody understands how lucrative that could be. If you're talking about a dog association that's coming in, how many folks would you expect to have at one of these field trials. [LB41]

KIM SNOW: That's hard to say, I would say an average of 50 dog owners. [LB41]

SENATOR SCHILZ: That's the dog owners themselves and then you've got judges. [LB41]

KIM SNOW: Yeah, sure. I mean, and it can be as little as ten, but it can be as many as 100, I mean a big field trial. But it's like either a one- or a two-day event is what it is... [LB41]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Yeah. [LB41]

KIM SNOW: ...most of them. [LB41]

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SENATOR SCHILZ: Yeah, and how many opportunities do you, I mean, I take it you have people that are calling and asking if you can sponsor such things. [LB41]

KIM SNOW: Um-hum. There are...it's virtually every hunt dog breed club out there. You've got German shorthairs, labradors and springer spaniels and then you've got all-breed type situations. You know, you've got bird dog challenges they're called, they're even on TV and Pheasant Hunters Unlimited do a circuit-type one at several locations across the U.S. And then they total points for a championship. It is the hunter-dog industry competition to get AKC titles. When they register dogs they get more money for their pups. It's a... [LB41]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Pretty good sized business, isn't it? [LB41]

KIM SNOW: Oh yeah, it is. It's all together it's a, yes, it's quite a big business. [LB41]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Thank you. [LB41]

KIM SNOW: Thank you. [LB41]

SENATOR LANGEMEIER: Are there any other questions? Seeing none, thank you very much, appreciate your testimony. [LB41]

KIM SNOW: Thank you for your time and service. [LB41]

SENATOR LANGEMEIER: Further testimony in support of LB41? Welcome. [LB41]

JAMES M. INGRAM: Hi. My name is James M. Ingram, J-a-m-e-s I-n-g-r-a-m and I want to thank the committee, as well as the Game and Parks, for the opportunity to testify in favor of this bill and modification. I'm a falconer. For official, I live in Omaha. I'm a physician and I've been a falconer for about 15 years. I fly a peregrine falcon; it was born in captivity, purchased from Washington State and I've been flying her for about ten years now on game. And I'm in favor of all the modifications of this bill in light of the federal mandate that the falcon regulations change around the country, and Nebraska has taken the lead in this respect to work on this modification, you know, as quickly as we possibly can. As far as falconry goes, I hunt with a bird and I also am a falcon breeder as well. There's only been two falcon breeders in the state so far. And I raised...or had a success last year with the first captive-bred aplomado falcon in the state of Nebraska. And I'm totally in favor of all the language in the current bill. There's only one modification that I wanted the committee to consider and actually this modification is currently part of the bill and has been part of the bill since it was originally written. And it's on page 33. And this is not a change that is proposed, this is currently in the law, and I just wanted to make a comment on it looking at it from a

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different point of view. And that's on page 33, 37-4,103, I'll just read it, any person violating any provision of Section 37-497 or 37-498 shall be guilty of a Class IV misdemeanor. In addition, the court shall require that any raptor or raptors in the possession of the offender be confiscated and the permit of the offender be revoked. I'm for, you know, when somebody breaks the law, revoking the license and the Class IV misdemeanor is appropriate punishment. In the state of Nebraska, Class IV misdemeanor means that you pay between \$100 and \$500 fine and I'm for that and agree with all that. The only question I have is really with the word "confiscation" of raptors. And the reason I bring that up is maybe there's a way to make it equitable because as a raptor breeder I have eight aplomado falcons each purchased for between \$2,000 and \$4,000 each and if I'm made to...if my birds are confiscated I could lose \$25,000 which seems to be, you know, overly punitive based on a Class IV misdemeanor definition. And so maybe you could put in a time frame of...of...let's say, if I...if for instance I break the law, lose my license, obviously I have to get rid of the birds, and rather than confiscation be allowed to, you know, sell the birds or, you know, give them away or whatever before they're actually just confiscated. And this is just a suggestion. And because this is a time where we can give suggestions about the current bill and, you know, this particular issue. And I just wanted to bring that up, looking at it from a different point of view rather than say somebody who has trapped a raptor, you know, and they want it confiscated because you don't have the license and release it. That's different all together, but confiscating animals that are worth so much money is...seems to me to be excessive. So that's my only comment on the bill. Otherwise I think it's perfect and it really will make things a lot easier for the fish and game department to write all the regulations required to practice falconry in the state in compliant with the federal law. Any questions? [LB41]

SENATOR LANGEMEIER: Very good. Are there any questions? Seeing none, thank you very much. We appreciate your testimony. [LB41]

JAMES M. INGRAM: Okay. Thank you. Sure. [LB41]

SENATOR LANGEMEIER: Further testimony in support? Good afternoon. [LB41]

MARK CHURCHILL: Good afternoon. My name is Mark Churchill, M-a-r-k C-h-u-r-c-h-i-l-l. I'm here on behalf of the Nebraska Falconers Association. We'd like to thank Senator Hadley and Game and Parks for the effort that went into this bill. We're happy to support it and we do appreciate, of course, this opportunity to be heard. I'm going to keep my comments brief. We, as an association, appreciate the bill's definition of a raptor. I think it's very straightforward; it's scientifically accurate and it does give Game and Parks the authority they need to effectively manage birds of prey in the state. The bulk of the rules, as Mr. Douglas alluded to earlier, a lot of this is simply a simplification of the current regulations, things that are now in statute are under this bill would be sort of handed over to the Game and Parks Commission where we believe the

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management of raptors could be a little more responsive, a little more immediate. If a situation arises that needs a regulatory change it would be nice to be able to effect that at the commission level, the regulatory level, rather than having to come down here every couple of years to amend the law. That said, well I think I'm done. Thank you. [LB41]

SENATOR LANGEMEIER: Very good. Are there any questions? Senator Haar. [LB41]

SENATOR HAAR: I was just wondering whether you had any comments on the last testimony about confiscating the raptors? [LB41]

MARK CHURCHILL: As an association, we have not seized on that as a major issue. We're not necessarily opposed to Doctor Ingram's ideas about an alternative solution, another, say friendlier, way of dispersing the birds. It may, in fact, be beneficial to have another venue if the state hypothetically were to seize birds of prey that have been held by a falconer. What then? What would Game and Parks do with them? They're probably going to farm them out to try and offer them to licensed falconers or raptor educators anyway. So I see no problem with allowing the falconer in question to try and make those arrangements. However, it's not a major concern of ours. [LB41]

SENATOR HAAR: How many members do you have? [LB41]

MARK CHURCHILL: Active members, somewhere in the neighborhood of 30, maybe, perhaps, half of whom might actively be hunting in a given year. [LB41]

SENATOR HAAR: Um-hum. Okay. Thanks. [LB41]

MARK CHURCHILL: Certainly. [LB41]

SENATOR LANGEMEIER: Very good. Any other questions? Seeing none, thank you very much. [LB41]

MARK CHURCHILL: Thank you. [LB41]

SENATOR LANGEMEIER: Well done. Further testimony in support of LB41? Good afternoon. [LB41]

DAVE MLNARIK: My name is Dave Mlnarik D-a-v-e M-l-n-a-r-i-k. I'm the executive director of the Nebraska Sports Council and I want to talk about one specific part of this bill that we're definitely in support of, but we support the entire bill. The Sports Council holds a number of events at state parks and lakes on an annual basis. And we don't always get to do what we want to do. And that's okay, because that, I think, is a great demonstration of the care that the parks commission takes in protecting the

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environment and the resources that are available to us. And so when I'm looking at...it's my understanding that the park permit fee, an increase is being proposed from \$20 to \$25 annually; from \$4 to \$5 for a one-day permit and I just want to come out and say that we certainly support that because we recognize that it amounts to proper care of the parks. It goes toward that. And as a consumer, I visit state parks and lakes with my family somewhere in the neighborhood of two to three dozen times a year. When I take my four kids and my wife to a movie, we pay \$38 before we get to the popcorn counter. So \$25 for 25 visits to the state parks and for some reason they don't whine and bawl and moan after the parks visits like they do coming home from the movie. So I think there's some education and obviously some fulfillment that we get at the state parks on the consumer level. And I just want to say as an organization we've enjoyed great cooperation from the park superintendents and the management at the game commission. And they have been, obviously, protective of the parks and the regulations, but also very pro activity other than hunting and fishing, what you might deem as traditional activities. So I'd be happy to answer any questions about our association or my points of view on this. [LB41]

SENATOR LANGEMEIER: Very good. Are there any questions? Seeing none, thank you very much for your testimony. [LB41]

DAVE MLNARIK: Thank you. [LB41]

SENATOR LANGEMEIER: Well done. Further testimony in support of LB41? Seeing none, is there anyone wishing to testify in opposition? Seeing none, is there anyone that wants to testify in a neutral capacity? Seeing none, Senator Hadley, do you wish to close? Senator Hadley waives closing. Thank you very much. That concludes the hearing on LB41. We will now move on. Senator Pankonin is here. We'll move on to LB421. And welcome back to the Natural Resources Committee. Good afternoon. [LB41]

SENATOR PANKONIN: (Exhibit 3) Good afternoon, Chairman Langemeier and members of the Natural Resources Committee. I'm Dave Pankonin, P-a-n-k-o-n-i-n and I represent the 2nd Legislative District. And for those that are holdovers to this committee, you'll be happy to know this isn't the trails bill. So...after two years...and I do want to express while I'm on that topic briefly, just all the cooperation and work, Senator Haar in particular, on the resolution of that issue that took a couple of years to get to. But today I'm here to introduce LB421. This bill would increase the Nebraska Game and Park Commission's annual park entry permit fees. The fee increases would be delayed until January 1, 2012 in order to avoid disruption for people who already purchased a permit for the current year. When the Game and Parks Commission asked me to introduce this bill, I knew there might be opposition to another attempt to increase park entry permit fees. Despite this possibility, I agreed to introduce LB421 for several reasons. First, Nebraska has more than 80 state parks and five of them are located in

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my legislative district. They are Arbor Lodge, Nebraska City; Louisville State Recreation Area, Mahoney State Park, Platte River State Park, and Schramm Park State Recreation Area. These parks are enjoyed year-round by my constituents and visitors to the area alike. The communities in my district derive a tremendous sense of civic pride and identity because of the proximity of the parks to them. The economic benefits the parks create are extremely important to local communities and the entire state as well. If the five parks I named generate such a positive effect in my area of the state, I can only assume that the same is true for the rest of the state parks which are located throughout Nebraska. For example, it is reported that Mahoney State Park is the second most popular tourist attraction in the state and I know that in Senator Schilz's district in Ogallala the state park makes a big difference, a little bit north of that community. Next I'm concerned that increased costs and reduced revenue may lead to deferred maintenance in our state parks to the point that some of them may have to be closed to protect the public from unsafe or unsanitary conditions. In Nebraska we have a policy that calls for state parks to be supported primarily by a user-based funding system. Approximately 70 percent of the operating and maintenance budget for our parks comes from fees, not taxes, paid by the people who use the parks. Only about 30 percent of the parks system budget comes from the General Fund and this percentage has been declining for years. The Game and Parks Commission has been cutting its budget just like the rest of state government. At the same time, the commission has faced steadily increasing cost for equipment, materials, contracts, fuel, and personnel. Operating and maintenance services have been reduced in as many ways as possible so the failure to approve very small increases in the park-user fees may result in reduced hours of availability and the possible closing of some of our state parks. Finally, I thought about the fact that the current annual \$20 park entry permit per car had not been increased for five years. Nebraska's fee is one of the lowest, if not the lowest priced park entry permit fee among all the states that use a user-based...user-fee-based funding system. For example, for a family of four the proposed increase of up to \$5 per year per car would mean an annual per person increase of about \$1.25 to use all the state parks. Obviously, if a car entering in a park carries more than four people, the increased cost per person is even smaller. The proposed fee increases for the other permit categories are correspondingly small. If a trip to a state park is considered to be a form of entertainment and relaxation it would be instructive to consider the proposed user fee increases as compared with some other familiar sources of fun and excitement in our state. I offer a comparative chart of the cost for other popular entertainment and recreation activities in our state. I hope these comparisons will help you to see that it is time to support the park permit entry fee increases proposed in LB421. And I'm very fortunate that the previous speaker already talked about this so one of my comparisons is a movie. So thank you for your attention. We'll look forward to any questions and, obviously, there will be people behind me that will talk more about this topic. Thank you. [LB421]

SENATOR LANGEMEIER: Very good. Are there any questions for Senator Pankonin?

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Seeing none, thank you very much. Now we open the discussion up to proponents of LB421. [LB421]

ROGER KUHN: (Exhibit 4) Chairman Langemeier, members of the committee, my name is Roger Kuhn, administrator for the state park system at Nebraska Game and Parks Commission. That's R-o-g-e-r K-u-h-n. Handing out what Senator Pankonin referred to a little bit ago, which is a price comparison of our park entrance permit compared to the other states across the country, and as that handout will show you, there's 37 parks that require a park entrance permit to their state park system. Out of those 37 parks, Nebraska currently is the lowest or the cheapest at \$20 per year per vehicle. Now there are 13 states, obviously, that do not require a park permit to their state park system. And those particular states are funded in other ways, alternate funding sources, etcetera. One bordering state that might be an example of that is the state of Missouri does not require a park permit. They get one-eighth of 1 percent of their state sales tax that supports their state park system so that's the way they operate their state parks. So their state parks are free to the visitors that come there. So that just gives you an idea of where Nebraska ranks on a national level. Just want to give a quick background so you kind of understand, maybe, the scope of the state park system. A lot of you, I think, are familiar with that; some of you may not be. But we currently manage 85 state park areas across Nebraska. We have different designations. We have eight state parks, 11 state historical parks, 64 state recreation areas, and 2 state recreational trails. That encompasses 140,000 acres of land and water. We get about 9 million visits a year to the state park system. So it's a very large operation, a lot of properties, a lot of infrastructure that we take care of. Some of the infrastructure we have or makeup of buildings, roads, fences, septic systems, water systems, electrical distribution systems, boat ramps, boat docks, you know, etcetera, I mean, it's a very diverse operation and a very large operation. So that kind of gives you an idea of the scope of what we take care of. Our state park system has received over the years a lot of positive recognition. Now I know USA Today newspaper came out and ranked Fort Robinson State Park as one of the top ten family gathering places in America. We didn't go out and solicit that, that was a thing that they initiated and did. More recently, ReserveAmerica went out and looked at 3,000 assisted park areas across the country and many of our parks ranked very high in a number of those categories. So I think we have a lot to be proud of of our park system; we have a long tradition. And so it's important to understand that the park system plays a large role in the tourism industry in the state as well, the economic impact, if you will. Tourism is the third largest industry in Nebraska. Department of Tourism, last time I checked, they tried to rank the tourism attractions in Nebraska and 15 of the top 25 tourist attractions in Nebraska were state park areas. So it's easy to probably equate that the state park system is pretty much the backbone of the tourist industry in Nebraska which is the third largest industry. So I think we play an important role economically. I know we've used multipliers with DED, etcetera, to try to come up with the economic impact the state park system has and that number is \$46 million. So I believe, you know, it's a good investment for the state to invest in these treasures, if you

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will, these assets, etcetera. We sell 457 (sic) park permits a year, amounts to \$4.4 million. With this increase we anticipate that would generate approximately \$1 million in additional revenue. Understand the park permit, you heard Senator Pankonin talk about 70 percent of our budget is made up of user fees. The park permit is the largest revenue generator of those user fees that pay for the park system. So it's a main component of how we do it. We also have revenues or fees for lodging, camping, as well, but the park permit is the largest revenue generator we have. One of the reasons for asking to increase the park permit, it has been five years since the last increase. During those five years we tried to put some numbers together as far as what costs on materials or things that we use frequently in our park system. In looking at that, an example would be a 72-inch deck mower over the last five, six years, it went up 18 percent; grills, the ground and waste level grills, 83 percent; concrete, 17 percent; lumber, nearly 30 percent; shingles, 99 percent; gravel, we have, oh my gosh, that's probably about 400 miles of road, gravel, 139 percent increase in those five or six years. So, what's happening is, we're just simply trying to keep up with the ever-increasing cost of doing business and the park, it being the primary revenue generator, would help us do that. Is it a fix-all? No, I wouldn't go as far as to say that, but it certainly will help us remain, at least, stable in an ever-increasing situation. So, you know, those are some of the prices we deal with. Deferred maintenance, you heard Senator Pankonin mention deferred maintenance. With all the infrastructure we have, we have a lot to deal with and it's not like we don't do maintenance; we do. We did a \$2 million fix of a septic system at Fort Robinson recently and there's many projects and many examples where we do maintenance all the time. However, there's a lot of maintenance that are big-ticket items that our general O and M budget just can't tackle. So we rely on a lot of partners, grants, donors, etcetera, whatever we can do to do it. But we currently have about a \$34 million backlog of deferred maintenance. You know, I don't want to, if at all possible, see that increase. We need budget to continue to take care of these things. So, those are some reasons why, I guess, the park permit, we feel, needs to be looked at seriously. Last two years in '09 and '10, our park permit sales were at a five-year high, so people are coming to the parks. We last raised the park permit in '07, January, '07. It went up at that time about 20 percent. We sold 447,000 permits in '06 before it went up. Last year we sold 457,000 permits. So people are still buying the permits even though it went up to \$20 last time. So we don't anticipate a big drop-off, especially considering the price compared to other states. In talking about other states, we did look up some comparisons. I know we get questions oftentimes, well how does Nebraska compare, park systems compare to other states? You see the park and their prices, but just an idea, Missouri as an example, have 85 park areas statewide. They have 598 full-time employees. We in the Game and Parks Commission have been proactive in streamlining, consolidating, partnering; we went from...in 2008, we went from 216 full-time employees to 179 full-time employees for the state park system, 37 positions eliminated that used to serve the state park system. So we've been doing those things. We've used privatization; we have 19 private operators that provide services at our state parks, so we use that tool. We are surplusizing properties to local communities that are

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willing partners, willing communities, to reduce our load that the locals can take care of. So we continue to strive to get as efficient as possible; look at all the tools in the toolbox. But given that, I think there's still a fundamental responsibility for our foundation to make sure that infrastructure is maintained and that we're providing a safe, clean environment or experience for the visitors that come. We're inviting them to the parks, their expectations are simply that. So the increase would certainly help get us there. And, you know, there's other states that I compare to locally, but we fare very well as far as our budget in comparison to other states. With that I will try to answer any questions you might have. [LB421]

SENATOR LANGEMEIER: Senator Carlson. [LB421]

SENATOR CARLSON: Senator Langemeier, thank you. Roger, in the bill itself, and I've got a mental block here, page 2, the fee for the annual permit for a resident motor vehicle shall not...shall be not more than \$25. So we're going from \$20 to \$25, and then nonresident, not more than \$30. What does the not more mean? [LB421]

ROGER KUHN: That means that's the cap that we can go up to if you pass this legislation. [LB421]

SENATOR CARLSON: So where are you now? [LB421]

ROGER KUHN: We're at \$20 currently, which is currently the cap we can go up to. [LB421]

SENATOR CARLSON: And I don't care if you go to \$25 or I don't care if you go to \$35, but you would go to \$25? [LB421]

ROGER KUHN: Correct. [LB421]

SENATOR CARLSON: Okay. So, it's not somewhere in between. You'll go to \$25 and you'll go to \$35. [LB421]

ROGER KUHN: Yes. [LB421]

SENATOR CARLSON: Or \$30, yeah. Okay. [LB421]

ROGER KUHN: Yeah. Well the nonresident park permit we've had authority to go \$5 more. We have the authority to charge \$25 currently. We do not. We have not exercised that authority as a commission. And part of the reason is, of those states you saw the park permit, only two of them have a nonresident park permit and the reasons for that is it creates more administrative, more accounting, separation law enforcement, you got to have, you know, identify the plates, plus some people view that as a...maybe a

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difference between nonresidents. Most states' answer to that as they want to encourage nonresident visitation to their state park system because they bring outside dollars to the state. And that's one of the primary reason other states don't do that. And we haven't...we have the authority, we understand that, we just haven't exercised that part. [LB421]

SENATOR CARLSON: Okay. Thank you. [LB421]

SENATOR LANGEMEIER: Senator Haar. [LB421]

SENATOR HAAR: I just wanted to compliment you on the work you do, because I live a half mile south of Branched Oak and we just use it all the time, and Indian Caves, and so on and so forth. So you do a wonderful job; thank you. [LB421]

ROGER KUHN: Well thank you, appreciate that. [LB421]

SENATOR LANGEMEIER: Very good. Senator McCoy. [LB421]

SENATOR McCOY: Thank you, Chairman Langemeier. Quick question, and it just springs to mind, and you probably answer, Roger, whether it's been done in any of these states. And this chart is very helpful that you put out. Has there ever been any thought to a higher annual park fee, but the ability to use it on multiple vehicles? Are there any states that have done that? [LB421]

ROGER KUHN: Yeah. South Dakota did that at one time. They charged...it was at the time...that's probably been five to seven or so years ago, they went to a \$50 transferable park permit because of the issue of multiple cars. And what they...what ended up happening, you could put it on your rear-view mirror or you could give it to whoever you want; it's transferable. When that happened...I believe they've eliminated that because they sold very few of them. There just wasn't a demand like they thought there would be. Most people just would lose them and everything else, it just, I believe, it went away. It never had any...got any real traction. But they...I know they tried that. [LB421]

SENATOR McCOY: I just...it sprang to mind, I would think if you had that within a family, maybe, maybe be a little more palatable for a higher fee. But, you know, maybe one weekend you've got the family van if you're just going to the beach and the next... [LB421]

ROGER KUHN: Well, we do sell a duplicate permit. When you buy an annual and you got the receipt with it, you can buy a duplicate, which is in legislation, for half price. So in theory, a lot of people would tell you our annual park permit, really right now, with \$20 and \$10 for a duplicate is \$15 which is significantly lower than other state if you want to

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look at it that way. So there is a duplicate permit offered for if you do have a second vehicle in the family and that's half price of the annual permit. [LB421]

SENATOR McCOY: Thank you. [LB421]

SENATOR LANGEMEIER: Senator Haar. [LB421]

SENATOR HAAR: One other question I really should have asked Senator Pankonin about this, but as you've talked about this increase, is that just...do you anticipate the Governor's veto because of increasing fees? [LB421]

ROGER KUHN: I would hope not if it comes out of the Legislature. I can't speak for the Governor, obviously. [LB421]

SENATOR HAAR: Of course not. [LB421]

ROGER KUHN: But that's always a possibility. You know, we would, I guess, have to cross that bridge if it came. But, you know, we're in a position, I think, we're in a crossroads with our state parks system, I really do. And it's important if we're going to support a park system like we've known it, this is an important piece of legislation. [LB421]

SENATOR HAAR: Thank you. [LB421]

SENATOR LANGEMEIER: Very good. Are there any other questions? Senator Smith. [LB421]

SENATOR SMITH: Mr. Kuhn, you said that 70 percent, did I understand your operating budget is from user fees? Is that... [LB421]

ROGER KUHN: Correct. [LB421]

SENATOR SMITH: Okay. And the other 30 percent is? [LB421]

ROGER KUHN: From the General Fund. Correct. And that has been evolving over the years; the ratio has been changing, so we've been relying heavier and heavier on user fees over time as the General Fund dollars has gotten tighter. [LB421]

SENATOR SMITH: Thank you. [LB421]

SENATOR LANGEMEIER: Senator Haar. [LB421]

SENATOR HAAR: And finally to follow up on Senator Smith's question. How...30

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percent...so what's your overall budget when we're doing the math here? [LB421]

ROGER KUHN: The overall budget for the state parks system right now is approximately \$22 million. [LB421]

SENATOR HAAR: Okay. Thank you. [LB421]

ROGER KUHN: We generate about \$17 million in revenue total. [LB421]

SENATOR HAAR: Great. [LB421]

SENATOR LANGEMEIER: Any other questions? Seeing none, thank you very much. [LB421]

ROGER KUHN: Thank you. [LB421]

SENATOR LANGEMEIER: Appreciate your testimony. Further testimony in support of LB421? Don't be shy, come on up. Welcome back to the committee. [LB421]

BRUCE KENNEDY: Yes. I'm learning my way around the Capitol. [LB421]

SENATOR LANGEMEIER: Very good. [LB421]

BRUCE KENNEDY: Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, my name is Bruce Kennedy, B-r-u-c-e K-e-n-n-e-d-y. I'm here this afternoon representing the Nebraska Wildlife Federation. Last night at our board meeting we discussed one of our programs called No Child Left Inside. There seems to be a number of organizations that are trying to get people to the outdoor situation, including the healthcare profession. It's just a healthier, good deal to get them outside. Doesn't seem like a real good time to be cutting back on our parks. So we support this measure 100 percent. While I've got an audience, we...if we had our druthers, we would like to see a few more natural areas in our state parks, but we'll take what we can get. And we realize that these folks are doing a really good job with a limited amount of resources. A \$5 increase is a very small amount for what we're getting. So we're very much in support of that raise in the fee. We hold our...for the last two years, we have held our fund-raiser at Mahoney State Park and we were very, very pleased with the facilities and the helpful manner that we got from park staff. So we just really do appreciate the job that's being done and we'd like to give these folks the dollars to do it. That concludes my testimony. I'd be glad to answer any questions. [LB421]

SENATOR LANGEMEIER: Very good. Are there any questions for Mr. Kennedy? Seeing none, thank you very much for your testimony. [LB421]

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BRUCE KENNEDY: Thank you. [LB421]

SENATOR LANGEMEIER: Further testimony in support of LB421? Good afternoon, Mr. Fisher. [LB421]

REX FISHER: Good afternoon. Senator, I'm Rex Fisher, R-e-x F-i-s-h-e-r. I'm out of Gretna and I'm an at-large commissioner, so I guess technically I can claim to represent all 85 parks because I'm the only at-large there is. Before I get into my testimony, Senator Haar, I wanted to clarify one thing you asked earlier on fenced in or canned hunting areas. There are only five that we know of in the state of Nebraska right now, so if your constituent wants more information on that, I thought that might be helpful because there's not that many. I'm here to speak, really, for a number of commissioners. You know, we're very sensitive to suggesting fee increases in this time. We understand the challenges you're dealing with. I think our commission has been aggressive in looking at everything we can do. I think we're one of the first agencies to put forward a reduced budget in anticipation of what would be going on with this budget cycle. We've privatized the food service operation at Mahoney so we would not lose money there anymore. We're also looking at outsourcing, privatizing some other functions that we do in the agency. So we've been very aggressive. We've also looked at other alternatives to increasing the park fee. You know, there's some states where you put it on the license plates. So everybody has access, which is an interesting concept because then every kid could get into the parks no matter where they're from. You know, that's the number one item that our park personnel spend their time on is issuing citations for no park permit. But this seemed to be the area to focus on at this point in time. I think to add to what Roger talked about, tourism is the third largest industry in the state and the state parks system is really the backbone of that industry. Park permit increase will help us continue to operate and maintain the parks safely so tourists will continue to come, which in turn helps the state's economy. If the park system is not funded properly and deteriorates, we lose potential outstate visitors who will take their dollars elsewhere, as well as Nebraskans who might decide to go to other parks in other states. So we have looked at this as a viable option, I think, for us. Stewardship is why we all serve. I think that's why the Game and Parks personnel do what they do. It's why the commissioners are on there. And our priority up to this point has been to maintain all 85 parks every year despite the fact that we haven't been able to increase the permit fee. And so our concern is that we may not be able to continue to operate 85 parks going forward. And we believe they're precious resources and we'd like to continue to keep all those parks up and running to serve as many citizens in state and out of state as we possible can. And with that I conclude my testimony. [LB421]

SENATOR LANGEMEIER: Very good. Are there any questions? Senator Haar. [LB421]

SENATOR HAAR: Well, thanks for your service. The question, do...do we have anything for low income families or is...is it straight across the board park fee? [LB421]

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REX FISHER: I think it's pretty much straight across the board, it's a set fee. That was one of the reasons we looked at the license. That way you get kids, low income, at risk, kids can come if they're in a vehicle that's registered in the state. But no, today it's just one fee. [LB421]

SENATOR HAAR: Okay. Thank you. [LB421]

SENATOR LANGEMEIER: Senator Christensen. [LB421]

SENATOR CHRISTENSEN: Thank you. How much did you say the extra \$5 would generate? I think somebody said it, but. [LB421]

REX FISHER: Roger. [LB421]

ROGER KUHN: A little over a million dollars is what it would generate. [LB421]

REX FISHER: A million dollars. [LB421]

SENATOR CHRISTENSEN: Will that decrease any asking from the state or is that just an increase? [LB421]

REX FISHER: We talked about how long that would go. I don't know that we have a set amount of time where we think that's going to take of things. We just know, at least for the time we can see, it allows us to keep all 85 parks up and running. And, you know, you never know what's going to change in terms of cost and other issues that could come up. [LB421]

SENATOR LANGEMEIER: Senator Carlson. [LB421]

SENATOR CARLSON: Thank you, Senator Langemeier. Rex, you said the food service at Mahoney has been privatized? For how long? [LB421]

REX FISHER: Permanently we hope. [LB421]

SENATOR CARLSON: No, I mean when did it start? [LB421]

REX FISHER: Oh, we just started here (laughter) we...yeah, we just started at the, I think, it was at the end of the year in December. We finally migrated all of the state employees that we had. We privatized it to a company called Treat America who takes care of some different facilities in Omaha. [LB421]

SENATOR CARLSON: So that just started for them? [LB421]

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REX FISHER: Yes. [LB421]

SENATOR CARLSON: And they were able to bring in their own employees? [LB421]

REX FISHER: Yes. [LB421]

SENATOR CARLSON: Okay. Okay, because I know from somebody that considered that before that that was a problem, but hopefully this will work out well. [LB421]

REX FISHER: Yeah. We definitely had a lot of hoops to work through on the HR side with the state, but, yeah, we're excited about what that means. And we're excited about some other things we're doing on publishing and our Internet service and some things we can do because Mahoney was not making money and we just can't have that. [LB421]

SENATOR CARLSON: Okay. Thank you. [LB421]

SENATOR LANGEMEIER: Senator McCoy. [LB421]

SENATOR McCOY: Quick question, Mr. Fisher, and maybe this has been addressed. Has there ever been any thought to, maybe, raising the fee on a park such as Mahoney, specifically, rather than across the board, specifically one park or another? And I guess what makes me think of that, it's obviously federally, there's some, Rocky Mountain National Park or others, that the fees are vastly different than other parks is my understanding, just from taking our kids across the country to different areas. Has there been any thought to this? That's something that's entered into your discussions? [LB421]

REX FISHER: Yeah, we've talked about that and I think Roger has some history on some other state that did that. But we chose to try to keep it consistent. You know, we...Mahoney is such a flagship that we also want to encourage people to come in there; it's geared for a lot of high use, so we chose not to do that. But if Roger can add to that. [LB421]

ROGER KUHN: We do charge... [LB421]

SENATOR LANGEMEIER: We can't make a record when you talk like that, sorry. [LB421]

REX FISHER: Oh, okay. [LB421]

SENATOR SMITH: Thank you. [LB421]

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SENATOR LANGEMEIER: Not that we don't want the answer, but. [LB421]

REX FISHER: That's fine. [LB421]

SENATOR LANGEMEIER: Senator Smith. [LB421]

SENATOR SMITH: Thank you, Senator Langemeier. Mr. Fisher, I think in your testimony you said that the budget proposals that were recommended, the reductions, took into consideration that this proposed increase would take place or was there something to that nature said? Maybe I misunderstood you. [LB421]

REX FISHER: I'm not sure I said that, I'm not sure. [LB421]

SENATOR SMITH: Okay. So was there some consideration given? [LB421]

REX FISHER: Oh, yeah, what I mentioned earlier is that when we came forward to the Legislature on our planned reductions, it was really...a lot of it was our administrative study committee that dealt with personnel and some other costs. But it was really separate from this. [LB421]

SENATOR SMITH: Okay. All right. [LB421]

SENATOR LANGEMEIER: Very good. Are there any other questions? Seeing none, thank you very much for your testimony. [LB421]

REX FISHER: Thank you. [LB421]

SENATOR LANGEMEIER: Appreciate you coming down. Further testimony in support of LB421? Welcome. It's okay, it's just recording you, it's not amplifying. So it's fine. [LB421]

JOANIE STONE: Okay. My name is Joanie Stone, it's spelled J-o-a-n-i-e S-t-o-n-e and I'm from Omaha, Nebraska. My husband and I are national, as well as state, officers for a large camping organization throughout the United States and Canada. And we have volunteered for Nebraska Game and Parks for 30-plus years. We are here today in support of the park permit being raised to \$25 a year per vehicle. We travel across the United States in our RV and have used many of the various parks across the country and we have found that Nebraska is definitely one of the less expensive park entry permits in the United States. However, we have some extremely beautiful parks in this state and we all do not like to see costs increase in whatever we do, whether it's for pleasure or for just for regular living expenses. However, we all know that it costs the park system, just like any other business, more money to run its business than it did five

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years ago. My understanding is that Nebraska has not increased its permit for five years. As you probably have been told, Nebraska has the lowest annual park entry fee of all the states within...that actually have an entrance charge. I think that was discussed earlier by someone. And we don't believe that a \$5 increase is too excessive. Our park system has made several cuts in the past few years. And, as I said, we're volunteers, so we know what has happened in these parks across our state and they need volunteers and we've done that. However, I don't think anyone would like to see our parks decrease in attendance because we can't keep up with the maintenance at the various parks. And if we don't have the funds to do the maintenance or the staff to do it, it is going to decrease. As I mentioned before, we volunteer many hours to the park system. We hear from many individuals that travel through our state, for example, for the College World Series, we camp host at Mahoney during that time. And you'd be amazed at the wonderful comments that we get in reference to that park and how they feel it's one of the greatest ones that they've come across in their RV. We want to keep our parks throughout Nebraska to be known as beautiful and well-kept parks. And the park system can't continue to do this without some increases in their permits. I thank you for allowing me to speak. And again I say that we are in favor of raising the permit in 2012 to \$25. Thank you. [LB421]

SENATOR LANGEMEIER: Very good. Are there any questions? Senator Dubas. [LB421]

SENATOR DUBAS: Thank you, Senator Langemeier. Thank you, Mrs. Stone is it? Yes. [LB421]

JOANIE STONE: Yes. [LB421]

SENATOR DUBAS: Thank you for testifying. What types of volunteer activities do you do at the parks? [LB421]

JOANIE STONE: Well, we camp host, is one of our things that we do and we normally do that about six weeks out of the year. We also bring in, through our organization, people to come into the park to do various...oh, items like planting of trees. If you're familiar with Mahoney State Park and the wildlife area that's in back of the horse barn and now they're big trees, well our organization brought in 90-some people and planted all of those trees when they were about so high. I've written several grants myself for Nebraska Game and Parks, for Ponca, Indian Cave, Mahoney, Platte River Park. When we come in and volunteer we do painting, we do cleanup, raking of leaves, putting wood chips around the trees, various different things like that. Each year we do...we bring in someone in April for our long weekend and do a lot of work. [LB421]

SENATOR DUBAS: So do you know if your organization, or if, perhaps, Game and Parks has assigned a dollar value to what you have done and what that would cost our

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parks if you weren't volunteering? If you can't answer that, I might visit with Game and Parks later about that, that's fine. [LB421]

JOANIE STONE: I can't tell you. If I knew that question before I came I probably could have... [LB421]

SENATOR DUBAS: That's fine. [LB421]

JOANIE STONE:looked that up and found that out for you. We kind of use a...like maybe a \$7-type, you know... [LB421]

SENATOR DUBAS: Per hour. [LB421]

JOANIE STONE: ...per hour type. [LB421]

SENATOR DUBAS: But it's obvious that you do...you are contributing a great value to our parks by the amount of hours you are volunteering, so thank you. [LB421]

JOANIE STONE: Thank you. [LB421]

SENATOR LANGEMEIER: Any other questions? I do have one question. [LB421]

JOANIE STONE: Yes, sir. [LB421]

SENATOR LANGEMEIER: As a new owner of an RV camper this last year, I can tell you the \$25 permit to get in, the fee is the least of my expense. [LB421]

JOANIE STONE: You're right on that. [LB421]

SENATOR LANGEMEIER: I had to have a new pickup. It's been an expensive venture, but the kids are loving it. The question I do have is as a camp host, and I've gotten an appreciation as we've gone across the state and meeting the camp hosts and they've been very helpful. A little off the subject here, is this Internet service at our parks. Do you get asked that very much, is there Wi-Fi in the parks? [LB421]

JOANIE STONE: Yes, we do get asked that question, sir. Yes. [LB421]

SENATOR LANGEMEIER: Okay. I like camping, but I still like to see what's going on in the news, so. I have asked that question. [LB421]

JOANIE STONE: We're all a little bit too dependent on our Internet service. [LB421]

SENATOR LANGEMEIER: That we are. And I have a TV and surround sound and

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everything else in it. So I'm a wienie camper, I guess. Thank you very much for your testimony and what you do for the parks. [LB421]

JOANIE STONE: All right. Thank you. [LB421]

SENATOR LANGEMEIER: Welcome. [LB421]

DAN HENRY: Good afternoon. Chairman Langemeier and members of the Natural Resources Committee, my name is Dan Henry, that's D-a-n H-e-n-r-y. I'm here representing the city of Louisville, Nebraska, to speak in support of LB421. First, I'd like to give you a little background, the relationship between Game and Parks and the city of Louisville. The city of Louisville currently operates a wastewater treatment facility that is located on leased ground from Game and Parks; that's been for about the last 12 years. In the last four years we have obtained a lease from Game and Parks for a new well field to...for the water supply for Louisville. Louisville State Recreation Area gets their water and sewer service from the city of Louisville. So this has been a good partnership between the city and the Game and Parks. It's both beneficial to the city and Game and Parks because if Game and Parks had to operate these facilities on their own, the costs would be considerably greater than what their costs are now. The other thing is, the city of Louisville is kind of landlocked, we have the river, we have a...Ash Grove Cement Company, so we're kind of landlocked. The place...the only place that we found water was Game and Parks property so, you know, we were very, very fortunate to be able work a deal with Game and Parks on this. The other thing that I'll tell you, because we have facilities located in their facility, I'm in and out of that park numerous times a day, seven days a week. You can only become so efficient. These people aren't wasting money, it's a matter of they just need additional revenue. I mean, I'm the individual that sets water and sewer rates. Nobody likes to raise rates, but at some point you have to increase revenue because your expenses steadily increase. That's a fact of life. So, I mean, I think that what they're asking for, if you look back to what...five years ago they were at \$20, they want to go to \$25, yeah, that sounds like a big increase, but if you divided it over the five years that's pretty minimal. The other thing that I would really like to say is that the impact of the park on our business district is tremendous. If you would talk to the local grocer, the hardware store owner, the people that own the Dairy Queen, they will tell you that during the summer months that the park is operating it is very, very beneficial to Louisville. So if, and we hope not, but if you don't allow an increase and they close the park and it's Louisville's park, it's going to have an immediate impact on the economy in Louisville. The other thing that I will say is that if you look at the increase that they're asking for and you compare that to what the costs for the consumer to maybe get to another park if you start closing some parks, it's probably going to cost the consumer more in the end in additional fuel costs than it will to pay the additional park fees. So, I think if you look at it from both sides, it's very well justified. The parks are run very well. The maintenance right now is, I mean, they're cutting it to the bone. There are things that should be done, and from our experiences at Louisville,

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if you don't fix it today, it will cost more to fix it tomorrow. So you have to keep that in mind. So I'd be happy to answer any questions, but I really would...I would like to reiterate that our support for the increase fees. [LB421]

SENATOR LANGEMEIER: Very good. Are there any other questions? I'm going to ask one more, kind of hypothetical, when you drive into Mahoney, what side is the inspection booth on, on your vehicle? [LB421]

DAN HENRY: When I drive into Mahoney? [LB421]

SENATOR LANGEMEIER: Yeah. [LB421]

DAN HENRY: It's on the left side. [LB421]

SENATOR LANGEMEIER: Why do we put the sticker on the right? Side note that I don't understand. (laughter) Thank you very much for your testimony. [LB421]

DAN HENRY: All right. Thank you. [LB421]

SENATOR LANGEMEIER: Further testimony in support of LB421? [LB421]

HENRY RICK BRANDT: Henry Rick Brandt. [LB421]

SENATOR LANGEMEIER: Welcome. [LB421]

HENRY RICK BRANDT: H-e-n-r-y R-i-c-k B-r-a-n-d-t. I've been appointed the official representative for governmental relations for the Nebraska Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation. And I want to give our support to the raising of the price for the parks. Awesome, awesome, Fort Robinson where the elk, the deer, the buffalo, the Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep roam. Fences, thousands of acres of fences that have to be kept up. They need...they need to have a McDonald's lunch, \$5.27 today for a Big Mac and a coffee pays for the increase of what we have to pay. I really don't have anything else to say. The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, because of not having the funding at Fort "Rob", we're going to go in with 30 people, the 12th, 13th, 14th and 15th of May for 3.5 days of work to take out a couple of miles of fence that are being a problem for the migration of the bighorn sheep and the elk. That's it. [LB421]

SENATOR LANGEMEIER: Very good. Are there any questions? Seeing none, thank you very much for your testimony, well done. [LB421]

HENRY RICK BRANDT: Thank you. [LB421]

SENATOR LANGEMEIER: Thanks for coming in. Well if I knew you were going to

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testify, I'd have saved some of those questions. (Laughter) Welcome. [LB421]

MARK PINKERTON: Thank you, Chairman Langemeier. Senators of Natural Resources Committee, my name is Mark Pinkerton, M-a-r-k P-i-n-k-e-r-t-o-n. I'm the District 1 Commissioner for the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission. Some of you have seen me around here before because I've been serving for at least a year or two. Even though I've been around a little bit, I've been getting thoroughly coached up before I came up here, so I'll see if I can remember some of these things. First of all, the reason that the stickers went on the right side is because, for those of you that are old enough to remember, we used to have the safety inspection sticker for your vehicle on the left side and so we couldn't put it there, plus they wanted to keep it out of your visibility when you're driving. Senator Dubas, as far as the volunteer work on the commission, we have a lot of good people and you've heard from some of them today, but we have between the wildlife side and the park side over 5,000 people who regularly volunteer to do work for us and probably close to half of those are on the park side. And without them we couldn't accomplish near what we accomplish. On a more serious note, I have served for a lot of years and I've been very involved as we've looked at ways to keep our parks functioning well and keep things efficient and I've been involved in the planning process. And as Roger mentioned, I'm not meaning to be negative, but we are at a crossroads where we either need to come up with some increased funding sources or we just can't afford to keep the number of parks open that we have open. And there are plans by district to address those things if they become necessary. I sure hope that they don't. One thing that probably goes without saying, but I want to point out because I think it's very important, with the economic shortfall that the state of Nebraska is facing, it becomes all the more important that we have nice local areas to do weekend vacations and recreate close to home. And so I think in this day and age, it's even more important that we have good state parks available and good state recreation areas available so people have those opportunities. And the one thing that I think our administration, our commissioners, and our park people are...feel very strongly about is the fact that if we can't put a quality park setting or provide a quality service out there, then we don't want that park to be out there because we don't want it to be in poor shape, we don't want it to be underserved. So we want it to be something that our state is proud of and that the people can enjoy. And with that I will close my comments. And if anyone has any questions for me, I'll try to answer them. [LB421]

SENATOR LANGEMEIER: Very good. Are there any questions for Mr. Pinkerton? Seeing none, thank you very much for your testimony. [LB421]

MARK PINKERTON: Thank you, sir. [LB421]

SENATOR LANGEMEIER: Further testimony in support of LB421? [LB421]

JOE HERROD: My name is Joe Herrod, J-o-e H-e-r-r-o-d, and I'm here representing the

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Nebraska Council of Sportsmen's Clubs. And I would like to thank the two commissioners who came today. We sportsmen are just delighted with our group of commissioners right now. They're coming to everything; they're showing up at Ducks Unlimited dinners, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Pheasants Forever. They're coming down here to testify; they're working hard. They call and talk to each other every day. They're very involved; they're constantly asking our opinions. And Mark Pinkerton is probably sitting back there thinking, my gosh, that's the nicest thing that Joe has ever said about me, because we're relatives (laugh). And Senator Schilz, I think he and I would agree that this park increase would be real nice out at McConaughy because 70 percent of those people come from Colorado and we need more of their money all the time. Please, when this bill...hopefully this will go to the floor and hopefully it will get passed and hopefully it won't get vetoed, but prepare for that. But believe me, all the people that use those parks they want to pay this money. [LB421]

SENATOR LANGEMEIER: Very good. Are there any questions for Mr. Herrod? Seeing none, thank you very much, appreciate your testimony. [LB421]

JOE HERROD: Thank you. [LB421]

SENATOR LANGEMEIER: (Exhibit 5, Exhibit 6) Further testimony in support of LB421? I do have a letter from Pat Engel, former state senator, and Robert Fricke from Ashland in support. Now moving on. Anyone wishing to testify in opposition to LB421? Seeing none, is there anyone wishing to testify in a neutral capacity? Come on up. Good afternoon. [LB421]

MELVIN THORNTON: Good afternoon. My name is Melvin Thornton, M-e-l-v-i-n T-h-o-r-n-t-o-n. I am trying to testify in a neutral position because I just heard about this bill this morning and I was not at all acquainted with the numbers from the Game and Parks Commission. So in all good conscience, I couldn't really urge you to vote one way or the other. But as a buyer of park stickers, at least one, usually two, for the past 41 years and I'm planning to get another one this year, I have really strong feelings about this and I wanted to share them with you. I, of course, as a retired person would prefer to keep paying the \$20 and I'm sensitive to what Senator Haar says about some people, you know; that is a stretch. On the other hand, I view \$25 as still a real bargain in this economy. The previous testimony provided you with lots and lots of comparisons and as just a person representing only my family, and a user of a lot of the parks a lot of time, I'd like to offer another couple, three comparisons actually. When the \$20 went into effect, that was probably a little bit more than half a tank of gas. Twenty-five dollars now is just about, for those bigger cars, half a tank of gas. That's no change. If I would like to get my wife and I and the rest of our car filled with grandchildren into the Elephant Hall, Morrill Hall here, during the year that would cost me \$45 which I also think is a bargain. At Christmas we took a car full of grandchildren to the Children's Museum. Now this was not a one-time deal, this was, you know, anytime during the year, that cost \$65. And

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yet, so many more opportunities, including Ashfall Park, for \$25 I'm again very...I think that really is a good bargain. So I'd like to have you...urge you to carefully think about this and thank you. [LB421]

SENATOR LANGEMEIER: Very good. Are there any questions? Seeing none, thank you very much for your testimony and sticking around today. Further testimony in a neutral capacity on LB421? Seeing none, Senator Pankonin, you're recognized to close. [LB421]

SENATOR PANKONIN: Chairman Langemeier, I just want to thank testifiers today and the committee being engaged as always, asking good questions, really think this does need serious consideration at this point by the committee and the Legislature. The question was asked about a possible veto, I don't know about that either, but I think this is an important issue because of these state parks, if we don't maintain them there's going to be more closures, there's going to be more problems with deferred maintenance that just never gets caught up. As we've heard today, these things are considered a treasure for our state and I think they need to be maintained. And, Chairman Langemeier, I hope you come to Louisville State Recreation Area with your RV, spend some money in Louisville. And I'll even buy you dinner there, if you let me know. How's that? [LB421]

SENATOR LANGEMEIER: That's pretty good. [LB421]

SENATOR PANKONIN: Okay. [LB421]

SENATOR LANGEMEIER: Would you entertain an amendment to move that sticker back over to the left side? [LB421]

SENATOR PANKONIN: I'm sure the folks back here would be willing to talk about it. One other little aside before I leave, Senator Langemeier and I were at a banquet at Mahoney on Saturday night in the middle of a big snowstorm and, you know, I just want to let you know the Game and Parks people were very accommodating. They had two people at the booth so I could buy my annual permit right then. And I did. (Laughter) Thank you. [LB421]

SENATOR HAAR: You must anticipate the price going up. [LB421]

SENATOR LANGEMEIER: And I was going to, too, but I didn't want them to stand out in the snow to handle that for me. Seeing no...that concludes the hearing on LB421. Thank you very much for your participation and have a safe trip home. (See also Exhibit 7, Exhibit 8, Exhibit 9) [LB421]