



**House
Legislative
Analysis
Section**

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EXEMPT WILD GAME FED TO POOR PEOPLE

House Bill 5917 as introduced
First Analysis (9-26-90)

Sponsor: Rep. John D. Pridnia
First Committee: Public Health
Second Committee: Tourism, Fisheries & Wildlife

THE APPARENT PROBLEM:

Public Act 507 of 1988 allows charitable, religious, fraternal, or other nonprofit organizations to serve wild game that is not state inspected at fund-raising events if the organization posts a warning at the entrance to the dining area stating that the wild game had not been subject to state or federal inspection. Some hunters and nonprofit organizations believe that the current law also, by implication, allows hunters to donate wild game to charitable organizations. (It is unlikely that a charitable organization, could serve wild game if it were not donated.) However, according to the Department of Public Health, the state's administrative rules, which adopt by reference the federal rules regarding food service, prohibit a licensed public food service establishment (such as a nonprofit organization) from serving food from an unapproved source. Legislation is needed to clarify this issue.

THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:

The bill would amend the Public Health Code to allow nonprofit organizations to serve uninspected game free of charge to poor people, provided that the organizations posted notices warning that the meat had not been inspected by state or federal health authorities.

MCL 333.12902

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:

According to the Department of Public Health, the bill would have no fiscal implications for the state. (9-25-90)

ARGUMENTS:

For:

Responsible hunters have traditionally shared excess game with friends, family, and the poor. There is ample precedent in Michigan's history for donating wild game to the poor. This tradition was recently affirmed with the enactment of Public Act 507 which allows people who attend fundraisers and meetings of nonprofit organizations to eat uninspected wild game. Since the wild game can already be served at fundraisers and other meetings, it seems only fair that a provision be enacted to ensure that excess game is not needlessly wasted and that it could be donated to feed the poor.

Against:

Many people find it horrendous that the legislature would even contemplate a bill that would subject the young, the old, and the infirm indigent, the poor in the most fragile state of health, to potentially tainted meat. Current law is very specific when it states that wild game can only be served by nonprofit organizations at certain times and under certain conditions. There is a big difference, for example, between a situation in which people who are part

of a fraternal organization decide to serve at their annual fundraiser the excess meat that they have accumulated during a hunting season and a situation in which a well-intentioned hunter donates a roadkill to a nonprofit organization. More than likely the people at the fraternal organization hunt together, or at least have a good idea of where other members hunt, so they have a good idea of the source of the food that they are eating. Further, people who are healthy and financially able enough to pay to attend a fundraiser are probably less susceptible to harmful organisms from slightly tainted meat than the young, the old, or the infirm indigent. When wild game is donated to a soup kitchen, however, the food preparation staff and the people who eat the food often have no idea of the source of the wild game. People may be less careful about food and other items that are sent to the poor. The poor who frequent soup kitchens should not be faced with the options of eating potentially tainted meat or eating no meat at all.

Response: Wild game is usually of leaner, better quality and healthier for people than "healthy meat" inspected by the DPH. The "healthy meat" is usually loaded with hormones that enable sick animals to make it to market. Therefore, the idea that wild game is inherently more dangerous to humans is false. In addition, food servers at nonprofit organizations that are licensed food service establishments can usually spot tainted meat and would be prohibited from serving that meat to poor people, just as they'd be prohibited from serving other tainted meat. Further, local health inspectors could still inspect the meat to ensure its quality.

Rebuttal: According to the Department of Public Health, local health inspectors inspect food serving facilities to ensure that the facilities are serving federally inspected meat. They are not veterinarians and would have no idea, by just looking at the meat, if the meat was contaminated by parasites or other nonvisible organisms. Therefore, the bill would allow meat that was donated to the poor to be served without being subjected to any sort of inspection.

POSITIONS:

The Department of Public Health has not yet taken a formal position on the bill. (9-25-90)

The Michigan United Conservation Clubs supports the bill. (9-25-90)

The Salvation Army supports the bill. (9-25-90)

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