

Legislative Analysis



COMMEMORATIVE BUCKS OF MICHIGAN, INC

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House Bill 5144 (Substitute H-1)

Sponsor: Rep. Richard Ball

Committee: Conservation, Forestry, and Outdoor Recreation

First Analysis (12-5-05)

BRIEF SUMMARY: The bill would require the Department of Natural Resources to recognize Commemorative Bucks of Michigan, Inc. as the official keeper of Michigan big game trophy records for deer, bear, elk, and turkey.

FISCAL IMPACT: The bill would have no apparent fiscal impact.

THE APPARENT PROBLEM:

Commemorative Bucks of Michigan, Inc., a non-profit organization with 3,000 members, was founded in 1981 to measure and keep a permanent record of trophy whitetail deer. Bear, elk, and turkeys were later added to their record-keeping responsibilities. Among the members, there are 150 official measurers located in communities across the state who use an internationally recognized system of measuring and ranking big game trophies. When a large animal is killed, a hunter can have it measured by one of the trained volunteers. Measuring is free, and if an animal meets the minimum requirements, the trophy is eligible for entry into the record book. The hunter must sign a statement that the animal was taken legally and ethically, and under fair chase hunting conditions. The record-keeping is cumulative, and the database permanent.

The organization publishes the records—measuring a buck's or bull's antlers, a bear's skull, or a turkey's beard and spurs—in the *Michigan Big Game Record Book*, currently in its 7th edition and containing 24,204 trophy entries. The record book is updated every three years. County-by-county listings are published for turkey and deer. The record book also contains technical articles, generally written by wildlife specialists at the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR). See [Background Information](#) below.

In 1988 the legislature passed a resolution designating Commemorative Bucks of Michigan, Inc. as the official record-keeper of trophy animals killed in Michigan. Not realizing the resolution was in effect only during that two-year legislative session, the organization has continued to collect and preserve trophy records for big game, often working in close partnership with the DNR. Legislation has been introduced to designate, in state statute, the organization as the state's official record-keeper.

THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:

House Bill 5144 would amend the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act to require the Department of Natural Resources to recognize Commemorative Bucks of

Michigan, Inc. as the official keeper of Michigan big game trophy records for deer, bear, elk, and turkey.

MCL 324.40120

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

For more information about Commemorative Bucks of Michigan, Inc. visit the organization's website at <http://www.buckfax.com>

ARGUMENTS:

For:

The purpose of measuring Michigan's deer and elk antlers, bear skulls, and the beards and spurs of turkeys is to record Michigan's finest examples of these trophies for posterity. The records list the big game species taken by sport hunters under fair chase hunting conditions, as prescribed by Michigan law. The records compiled by Commemorative Bucks of Michigan, Inc. provide conservation data that assists those in the Department of Natural Resources who manage wildlife populations. The records serve as benchmarks so that comparative statistical analysis is possible. For these reasons and others, the 150 trained measurers who are part of the non-profit, all volunteer organization Commemorative Bucks of Michigan, Inc. should permanently and officially be given the responsibility to record the taking of Michigan's trophy big game—bucks, bears, bulls, and toms.

POSITIONS:

The Department of Natural Resources supports the bill. (12-1-05)

Commemorative Bucks of Michigan, Inc. supports the bill. (12-1-05)

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■ This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan House staff for use by House members in their deliberations, and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.