



Senate Fiscal Agency
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BILL ANALYSIS



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House Bill 5144 (Substitute H-1 as reported without amendment)
Sponsor: Representative Richard Ball
House Committee: Conservation, Forestry, and Outdoor Recreation
Senate Committee: Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs

Date Completed: 5-9-06

RATIONALE

Commemorative Bucks of Michigan, Inc., is a nonprofit organization that was founded in 1981 to measure and keep a permanent record of trophy whitetail deer. Bear, elk, and turkeys later were added to the organization's 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 these trained volunteers for free. If the animal meets the minimum requirements, it 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 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*, which is updated every three years.

In 1988, the Legislature passed Senate Concurrent Resolution 761 designating Commemorative Bucks of Michigan, Inc., the official record-keeper of trophy animals killed in the State. Not realizing that the resolution was effective 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 Department of Natural Resources (DNR). It has been suggested that Commemorative Bucks of Michigan be designated in statute as the State's official record-keeper.

CONTENT

The bill would amend Part 401 (Wildlife Conservation) of 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.

Proposed MCL 324.40120

ARGUMENTS

(Please note: The arguments contained in this analysis originate from sources outside the Senate Fiscal Agency. The Senate Fiscal Agency neither supports nor opposes legislation.)

Supporting Argument

According to Commemorative Bucks of Michigan, the purpose of measuring deer and elk antlers, bear skulls, and the beards and spurs of turkeys is to record the State's finest examples of these trophies for posterity. These records demonstrate that Michigan is a good place to go hunting. Additionally, the records provide conservation data used in the management of wildlife populations, serving as benchmarks so that comparative statistical analysis is possible. The volunteers of Commemorative Bucks of Michigan have been making high-quality measurements of big game animals for many years, and the organization should be given the statutory authority to continue doing so.

Legislative Analyst: Julie Koval

FISCAL IMPACT

The bill would have no fiscal impact on State or local government.

Fiscal Analyst: Jessica Runnels

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This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan Senate staff for use by the Senate in its deliberations and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.