

**TESTIMONY OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF INLAND FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE
BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON INLAND
FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE
IN OPPOSITION TO L.D. 1171**

**“An Act to Restore Complimentary Licenses to Hunt, Trap and Fish for Residents 70
Years of Age and Older”**

Presented by Representative: FAULKINGHAM of Winter Harbor.

Cosponsored by Senator BALDACCI of Penobscot and

Representatives: BISHOP of Bucksport, BRIDGEO of Augusta, DILL of Old Town,
DRINKWATER of Milford, MASON of Lisbon, THORNE of Carmel, WOOD of Greene,
Senator: GUERIN of Penobscot.

DATE OF HEARING: Monday, March 31, 2025

Good afternoon, Senator Baldacci, Representative Roberts and members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee. I am Angie Dionne, Director of Licensing and Registration at the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, speaking on behalf of the Department, in opposition to L.D. 1171.

This bill repeals the law prohibiting complimentary licenses to hunt, trap and fish for persons 70 years of age and older, which has the effect of restoring the requirement that the complimentary license must be issued upon application.

Prior to 2006 the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife (MDIFW) did offer a license for qualified individuals aged 70 and over at no cost. However, as outlined in Title 12 §10853, paragraph B, beginning January 1, 2006, the Department stopped issuing complimentary licenses to residents over 70 years of age. The law changed such that individuals who would have qualified for these complimentary licenses to hunt, trap and or fish would now qualify for a lifetime license at a rate of \$8.00.

Currently, Maine residents are qualified for an Over 70 Lifetime License beginning January 1st of the calendar year in which they turn 70. This license is valid for the lifetime of the license holder regardless of future residency status; unlike complimentary licenses where the license holder must remain a Maine resident. A complimentary license issued to a resident over 70 years of age prior to January 1, 2006, must remain valid as long as the license holder satisfies the residency requirements within section 10001, subsection 53, or if their privileges are lawfully suspended or revoked by the commissioner for a violation of fish and wildlife laws under this Part.

When this law went into effect there was another great benefit created. A Maine resident can now acquire a Senior Lifetime License beginning at the age of 65. The Senior Lifetime License(s) for hunting, fishing and archery authorities may be sold together or separately while senior lifetime trapping licenses must be sold independently for Maine residents aged 65 through 69.

Senior Lifetime Licenses are very cost effective for customers. For example, Senior Lifetime Fishing Licenses can be acquired at a significantly lower price than the total cost of purchasing an annual fishing license from ages 65 to 69. While the annual fishing license costs \$25.00, an individual may purchase a Senior Lifetime Fishing License for \$50 at age 65. At age 66, the license is priced at \$40 and at 67 it drops to \$30 and so forth (Please see the attached list of costs for lifetime licenses). If one were to buy an annual fishing license for \$25.00 each year from ages 65 to 69, the total cost would be \$125.00. Therefore, purchasing a Senior Lifetime License at 65 results in a savings of \$75.00 over that 5-year period.

The \$8.00 fee for an Over 70 Lifetime License is nominal and does not require any additional license costs after the first year. This \$8.00 license can include any combination of hunting, archery and fishing authorities and the individual may also obtain a separate lifetime trapping license at no additional cost. The customer must prove Maine residency status and provide proof of any or all required safety courses at the time of purchase.

The Over 70 Lifetime License also includes the following permits: bear hunt, bear trap, muzzleloader, migratory waterfowl (state permit), pheasant, spring and fall turkey, coyote night hunt, one expanded archery antlerless and one expanded archery either-sex, provided that the license holder has the appropriate qualifications to participate in said activities. The only additional charges that the customer incurs are optional and would be for a moose permit if drawn, an antlerless deer permit and or the federal duck stamp if participating in migratory waterfowl hunting.

A motivating factor to begin offering these licenses for a fee of \$8.00 was to increase both revenue and federal funding for the Department. This proposal to remove the \$8.00 cost of the license would cause a significant loss in both areas. In 2024 we sold 2,691 over 70 Lifetime Licenses at the rate of \$8.00. For those 2,691 licenses, the Department collected \$21,528.00 in revenue. If we assume that the sale of these licenses will remain roughly the same annually, then that would equate to a total loss of \$215,280.00 over 10 years in revenue alone.

Federal funds apportioned annually to the Department under the Sportfish Restoration and Wildlife Restoration Acts are partially based on the number of paid fishing and hunting licenses sold in the State. Although a Lifetime License is only sold once, they are counted as a paid license for multiple years. Since the calculation of apportioned funds is based on paid licenses only, complimentary licenses cannot be included. Using the number of Over 70 Lifetime Licenses sold in 2024, we calculated approximately 7,670 fishing licenses and 2,535 hunting licenses would not be able to be included in the apportionment calculation if they were complimentary.

Based on these numbers, the annual loss to the State of Maine in Sportfish Restoration monies could be \$54,350.00 (this would be a shared loss between MDIFW and DMR), and the loss in Wildlife Restoration monies to the Department could be \$52,676.00.

Over the course of 10 years, the Department is looking at a loss of \$1,070,260.00 in federal money and a loss of \$215,280.00 of revenue which equates to a combined loss of \$1,285,540.00. This revenue loss could potentially increase annually based upon the number of complimentary licenses given and the overall base of available Sportfish and Wildlife Restoration funds.

Additionally, the Department can access up to 5% of the Lifetime License fund toward the annual budget. If Over 70 Lifetime Licenses were to be complimentary, that would mean that less money is going into that fund, and the amount available to the Department to use would also be reduced.

I would be glad to answer any questions at this time or during the work session.