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Helping Hunters Feed the Hungry by Jordan Cash

It is rare that a legislative program is introduced that will allow for easier administration of private charity at a minimal cost to taxpayers, yet that is just what Lincoln Sen. Tony Fulton has introduced with AM 2667, an amendment to LB 928.

LB 928 is a bill introduced by Ellsworth Sen. LeRoy Louden to create permits for the hunting of mountain lions.[\[1\]](#)

If AM 2667 were added to LB 928, it would establish a new donation program called "Hunters Helping the Hungry," which would be constructed, administered, and promoted by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission. This program would facilitate the donation of deer meat harvested during hunting season to social service agencies that would use the meat to feed the poor and the homeless. The program would be funded exclusively through the Hunters Helping the Hungry Cash Fund, which AM 2667 would create, and which would be funded only by private donations, sponsorships, and voluntary contributions from hunters at the time that they paid for their hunting permit.[\[2\]](#) The money raised would go to program administration and promotion and to reimburse meat processors for the costs incurred processing the donated meat. The processors-whom the state would contract with-would then make the meat available to various social service agencies.[\[3\]](#)

The program is modeled after Iowa's Help Us Stop Hunger Program (HUSH), a successful program that has provided millions of meals to Iowa's hungry. From 2003-2010, HUSH facilitated the processing of almost 46,000 deer, providing more than 8.2 million meals to Iowa's less fortunate citizens; in the 2010-2011 hunting season alone, HUSH provided 1.1 million meals to the hungry of Iowa.[\[4\]](#)

Iowa is not the only state with a program designed to allow altruistic hunters to help the hungry. All of our neighboring states-except for Wyoming-have similar programs designed to help the hungry in their state, as do numerous other states.[\[5\]](#)

Although Nebraska does have a Deer Exchange Program, that program is mainly there to account for a larger than expected deer harvest, and is primarily dependent upon donors and participants actively seeking each other out, using state facilities as little more than a transferal service. It also puts the responsibility on donors to ensure that the deer is properly field-dressed and finding-and paying for-a processor for the meat.[\[6\]](#) In

contrast, a Hunters Helping the Hungry program would make donation of venison much easier and less burdensome on the part of the donor, although it would still require all meat to be properly field-dressed.

Under AM 2667, the state would enlist willing and fully licensed meat processors to take the donated meat directly from hunters. The meat would then be processed and paid for through the Hunters Helping the Hungry Cash Fund according to fair market prices, with the processors then distributing the meat to charitable organizations.^[7] It is a public-private partnership to better enable donations for the hungry.

Also, as the Hunters Helping the Hungry Cash Fund would be funded exclusively by private donations and sponsorships, with hunters voluntarily contributing a separate donation to the fund at the same time that they pay for their hunting permit. As such, it will have little fiscal impact on the budget as a whole. Also, AM 2667 contains a provision that limits the program to only the revenue available within the cash fund, once that money is depleted the program would cease operation until it regains those costs.^[8]

This amendment would make it easier for hunters to be charitable, feeding the hungry, and will not cost general taxpayers a dime. It is good policy, fiscally responsible, and should be added to LB 928 and passed.

^[1] Nebraska Legislature, "Legislative Bill 928," January 10, 2012. Accessed March 29, 2012: <http://nebraskalegislature.gov/FloorDocs/Current/PDF/Intro/LB928.pdf>.

^[2] Nebraska Legislature, "Legislative Bill 1163," January 19, 2012. Accessed March 22, 2012: <http://nebraskalegislature.gov/FloorDocs/Current/PDF/Intro/LB1163.pdf>.

^[3] Nebraska Legislature, "Legislative Bill 1163," January 19, 2012. Accessed March 22, 2012: <http://nebraskalegislature.gov/FloorDocs/Current/PDF/Intro/LB1163.pdf>.

^[4] Iowa Help Us Stop Hunger Program, "Donation History." Accessed March 22, 2012: http://www.iowadnr.gov/Portals/idnr/uploads/Hunting/hush/hush_history_chart.pdf; Iowa Help Us Stop Hunger, "HUSH: Help Us Stop Hunger." Accessed March 22, 2012: <http://www.iowadnr.gov/Hunting/DeerHunting/HelpUsStopHungerHUSH.aspx>.

^[5] Tony Fulton, "Testimony before the Nebraska Legislature's Natural Resources Committee," February 2, 2012, p. 37-39. Accessed March 22, 2012: <http://www.legislature.ne.gov/FloorDocs/Current/PDF/Transcripts/Natural/2012-02-02.pdf>; National Rifle Association, "Hunters for the Hungry." Accessed March 22, 2012: http://www.nrahq.org/hunting/hungry_nat_list.asp. This website lists the existing programs for hunters helping the hungry, although some listed are not available statewide, Colorado and Missouri, for instance, do not have statewide programs.

^[6] Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, "Deer Exchange Program." Accessed March

23, 2012: <http://outdoornebraska.ne.gov/hunting/programs/deerexchange/>.

^[7] Nebraska Legislature, "Legislative Bill 1163," January 19, 2012. Accessed March 22, 2012: <http://nebraskalegislature.gov/FloorDocs/Current/PDF/Intro/LB1163.pdf>.

^[8] Nebraska Legislature, "Legislative Bill 1163," January 19, 2012. Accessed March 22, 2012: <http://nebraskalegislature.gov/FloorDocs/Current/PDF/Intro/LB1163.pdf>.



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