



MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WITNESS APPEARANCE FORM

BILL NUMBER: HJR 43		DATE: 2/18/2025
COMMITTEE: Government Efficiency		
TESTIFYING: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IN SUPPORT OF <input type="checkbox"/> IN OPPOSITION TO <input type="checkbox"/> FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES		
WITNESS NAME		
INDIVIDUAL:		
WITNESS NAME: ARNIE C. AC "HONEST-ABE" DIENOFF STATE PUBLIC ADVO		PHONE NUMBER:
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:
ADDRESS:		
CITY:		STATE: ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 2/18/2025 12:00 AM
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WITNESS NAME		
INDIVIDUAL:		
WITNESS NAME: MICHAEL		PHONE NUMBER:
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:
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CITY:		STATE: ZIP:
EMAIL: libertytree.cottage976@passinbox.com	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/18/2025 4:15 PM
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I SUPPORT HJR 43 as originally filed.



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WITNESS NAME		
INDIVIDUAL:		
WITNESS NAME: ANTHONY STEMATZ-BREITLING		PHONE NUMBER:
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:
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CITY:		STATE: ZIP:
EMAIL: stembreit@gmail.com	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/18/2025 11:17 AM
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I am against HJR 43 because "The resolution also requires the Department of Conservation to pay property taxes on real property in the amount not less than that private citizens would be required to pay" I have gone to Missouri state parks, conservation areas, and nature centers my entire life. They serve the community as much as any library or church, teaching about nature, hosting a variety of family events throughout the year, providing a space to exercise and/or relax after a long day's work. Asking the department of conservation to pay property taxes on all real property would put financial strain on the operations of the Department of Conservation -which already is dependent on volunteers and donations to maintain trails, campgrounds, and other community spaces. If a tax must be applied I encourage a compromise that only buildings associated with profit such as community centers, shops, and restaurants are subject to property tax. That way the shacks, cabins, storage sheds, and other buildings that are used in the day to day operations are not put at risk.



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WITNESS NAME		
INDIVIDUAL:		
WITNESS NAME: BRIAN L GARVEY		PHONE NUMBER:
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:
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CITY:		STATE: ZIP:
EMAIL: garvey.kc@gmail.com	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/17/2025 12:07 PM

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I would like to submit my testimony in opposition of this change to the MDC. The MDC provides critical and valuable oversight, education and protection of our natural resources and wildlife. Changing the funding sources and how this group is managed is not a priority and will work against what is right for our beautiful Missouri outdoors.



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WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: CAROL E DAVIT, MISSOURI PRAIRIE FOUNDATION		PHONE NUMBER: 573-356-7828	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: MISSOURI PRAIRIE FOUNDATION		TITLE:	
ADDRESS: P.O. BOX 200			
CITY: COLUMBIA		STATE: MO	ZIP: 65205
EMAIL: carol@moprairie.org	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/18/2025 1:35 PM	

THE INFORMATION ON THIS FORM IS PUBLIC RECORD UNDER CHAPTER 610, RSMo.

Chairman Baker and other members of the Missouri House Committee on Government Efficiency, I write on behalf of the leadership of the Missouri Prairie Foundation, a nonprofit prairie conservation organization, in opposition to HJR 43 for the following reasons:—HJR 43 would replace the four-person, apolitical Conservation Commission with one whose size, qualifications, and terms would be set by law. This is the exact opposite of what was intended when the Conservation Commission was established in 1936. Missouri’s Conservation Commission is the envy of the nation, precisely because elected officials do not control its decision-making. Management of fish and wildlife resources should remain based on science, not on political pressure. —Voters already decided that 100% of the Conservation Sales Tax shall be directed to the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC). In 1936, a group of concerned citizens banded together and, through initiative petition, passed the constitutional amendment that created the Conservation Commission, making Missouri the national leader in conservation. Voters have shown continued support by passing the Design for Conservation Sales Tax and repeatedly opposing legislative efforts to weaken the Conservation Commission. Moreover, MDC represents less than 1 percent of the total state budget.—Missourians overwhelmingly support MDC and its conservation work. MDC has conducted attitude, opinion, satisfaction, and participation surveys — via mail and telephone — for more than 30 years. Additionally, focus groups are held throughout the state to help determine Missourians’ opinions and attitudes about MDC and conservation. As a result of these surveys, MDC reports that most Missourians (85%) report they are interested in Missouri’s fish, forests, and wildlife; most Missourians (71%) agree that land should be acquired for fish, forest, and wildlife conservation; and most Missourians (94%) agree “It is important for outdoor places to be protected even if you don’t plan to visit the area.” MDC consistently delivers what a state’s citizens want and expect. HJR 43 threatens to disrupt what is working well for Missouri.—Financial inputs in MDC’s work, through the taxpayer-approved Conservation Sales Tax, yield impressive dividends for citizens statewide. Consider these facts: • In Missouri, the total economic impact of fish and wildlife recreation and the forest products industry is more than \$19 billion annually. • Expenditures and retail sales from fish and wildlife recreation and forest products support over 85,000 jobs. • Since 1980, the department has paid over \$25 million to Missouri counties in lieu of taxes. In fiscal year 2023, Missouri counties received \$1.7 million in forest cropland payments, levee and drainage district payments, and in-lieu-of-property-tax payments. • Fish, forest, and wildlife expenditures generate more than \$498 million annually in state and local tax revenue. • MDC has statutory responsibility for wildfire suppression on all state and privately owned lands across the state. In order to ensure Missouri’s citizens and lands are protected, MDC works closely with more than 750 local fire departments to offer training, provide federal excess property, grants for equipment, and promote wildfire prevention activities. • MDC administers the Federal Excess Property Program (FEPP) as well as the Fire Fighter

Property (FFP) Program, which provide rural fire departments with firefighting and emergency equipment such as fire trucks, generators, pumps, and wildfire related equipment. • FFP delivers \$4 million to \$5 million worth of equipment to fire departments annually. The current assigned inventory through both programs is over \$946 million. Due to the higher quality of equipment acquired, the FFP Program is slowly replacing FEPP • County Aid Road Trust (CART) Program Participation Totals for Fiscal Years 2022–2024 Established in 1983, this program allows for cost share (usually 50 percent, with a county’s match being in-kind services) of roadway maintenance with counties and other neighboring landowners. The focus of the program is to help ensure area roads are properly maintained and the public has adequate access to conservation areas. In 2023-2024, Miller County, for example, received \$107,849 through CART. For the good of Missouri and all Missourians, we urge the Missouri House Committee on Government Efficiency to oppose HJR 43. Sincerely, Carol Davit Executive Director



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: DANIEL ZEKOR		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: drokez@outlook.com		ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/14/2025 12:06 PM
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Historically, the Conservation Commission has demonstrated a high level of competence and integrity, and over its 88-year history, making many well informed decisions regarding the management and use of Missouri’s fish, forests, and wildlife resources statewide, while providing Missouri citizens and businesses countless services and opportunities. In my opinion, there are no compelling reasons for changing the size and composition of the Conservation Commission, the manner Commission appointments are made, its authority, or its funding. Moreover, it was the citizens who created the Commission by initiative petition, and if the citizens of Missouri feel the need for change, they should be the body that initiates that change, not a small group of legislators and/or special interest groups. We have, arguably, the best model for conservation in the nation. With a few rare exceptions, nearly every other state would love to have this model, yet it seems every year someone in the Missouri legislature wants to tear it down. Frequently these proposals are brought forth in the name of accountability, but in reality, they are all about the desire to politicize and needless exert pressure and control over an agency and its funding. I am opposed to this resolution and urge you to once again, please put this issue to rest. If successful, this HJR would serve to politicize Commission decision-making in a way contrary to the intent of those who worked to create the Commission in 1936 and the voters who approved its creation. It ignores the strong and longstanding support of the state’s citizens for the apolitical treatment of decisions pertaining to the management and use of fish, wildlife, and forestry resources of Missouri. Minimizing the influence of politics on Commission decision-making was and should remain a guiding tenet of the Commission and Department. I understand it is impossible to completely extract politics from this system; however, under the existing model, the most obtrusive possibility for introducing politics directly into conservation occurs at the time of gubernatorial appointment. The State Constitution does provide some minimal guidance as to the qualifications needed to serve as Commissioner, but gubernatorial appointments are typically treated as political reward, and the Conservation Commission appointment has always been highly desired. However, during the time that I have personally observed and studied the workings of the Conservation Commission (35 years), this body, in spite of background or political leanings, has worked extremely well as a governing unit, only adding to the legacy of Missouri having the best overall conservation model in the nation! During similar discussions over many years, a dominant theme was the perceived issue of representation. House members repeatedly made the point that citizens don’t know “their” Commissioner, implying that each person is (or should be) represented by a single Commissioner similar to the workings of the General Assembly. Therefore, the solution to the perceived problem of representation is to 1) increase the size of the Commission, and 2) regionalize appointments. Lost in this discussion is the notion that the Commission’s work is driven primarily by the need to promote conservation of natural resources first, with due consideration of public opinion and desires, and to a much lesser degree, political opinion. Moreover, most decisions by the Commission regarding

regulations, policy, and public use of the State's fish, forest, and wildlife are not or should not be based on geographic locations unless critical to conservation of resources or providing public service. District regionalization of Commissioners creates a nightmare scenario by introducing an extraordinary degree of politics and associated confusion, thereby corrupting a wonderfully simple and relatively precise system of agency governance. Consider the following: District based Commissioners immediately create a narrow constituency base, thereby diluting, dividing, and potentially undermining agency decision making – The expectation when managing public trust resources (i.e., fish and wildlife, public lands) is Commission decisions will be made 1) with the broad consideration as to what is best for the conservation of those resources, and 2) based upon what is best for the people with two caveats: (a) decisions should favor preserving options for future generations, and (b) the ultimate fate of the resources shall be determined only by an informed citizenry. Whether it be the "folks back home," a special interest group, or campaign contributor, the focus of individual commissioners will naturally become narrow and political. District based Commissioners increases the likelihood that conservation programs, projects, and spending will be more regionally based – Feeling the expectations of their constituents and whomever they are beholden to, commissioners will work to satisfy those expectations, leading to deal-making among commissioners and possibly facilitating pork-barrel projects and spending. Generally, the most detrimental result is the regional focus becomes the dominant mindset, displacing the more desirable need to give statewide perspective first. One last point, of all the priority issues facing our state, issues of significance to our citizens, issues worthy of legislative time, this is not one of them; nor would it be worth the cost to taxpayers to put such an item on the ballot. In the absence of any major failures in this system of governance, I see no need to make any of the changes proposed in this HJR; therefore, I am opposed to this bill and urge you to once again, please, put this issue to rest. Respectfully, Daniel Zekor
10151 S Bartle Lane
Columbia, MO 65201



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WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: DAVID GRABER		PHONE NUMBER: 573-214-1318	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: DUCKS UNLIMITED		TITLE: CONSERVATION COORDINATOR	
ADDRESS: 4605 ROEMER ROAD			
CITY: COLUMBIA		STATE: MO	ZIP: 65202
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 2/18/2025 12:00 AM	
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WITNESS NAME		
INDIVIDUAL:		
WITNESS NAME: DAVID GULICK		PHONE NUMBER:
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:
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CITY:		STATE: ZIP:
EMAIL: gulick13@gmail.com	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/17/2025 1:44 PM
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This NOT what we voters approved many decades ago but just a money grab by people who want to hamstring one of the best Conservation Departments in the country. Please vote no!



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WITNESS NAME		
REGISTERED LOBBYIST:		
WITNESS NAME: ELIZABETH SMITH		PHONE NUMBER: 573-694-5787
REPRESENTING: THE NATURE CONSERVANCY		TITLE:
ADDRESS: 2011 WAYNE AVENUE		
CITY: JEFFERSON CITY		STATE: MO
		ZIP: 65109
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 2/18/2025 12:00 AM
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WITNESS NAME		
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:		
WITNESS NAME: ETHAN DUKE		PHONE NUMBER: 660-815-5087
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: MISSOURI RIVER BIRD OBSERVATORY		TITLE:
ADDRESS:		
CITY: MARSHALL	STATE: MO	ZIP: 65340
EMAIL: ethan.duke@mrbo.org	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/18/2025 1:58 PM
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Testimony in Opposition to House Joint Resolution No. 43 Missouri House of Representatives, Conservation and Natural Resources Committee Ethan Duke Missouri River Bird Observatory 18 Feb 2025 Chairperson Baker, Members of the Committee, Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in strong opposition to House Joint Resolution No. 43. The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) is not just a state agency; it is a model for conservation nationwide. Since its inception, MDC has been a leader in science-based management of our fish, forests, and wildlife. The “Design for Conservation,” enshrined in our state constitution, ensures that the agency operates independently, free from political influence, and remains dedicated solely to protecting and enhancing Missouri’s natural resources. This resolution threatens that independence and undermines the core strengths that have made MDC so effective. A Model of Transparency, Efficiency, and Success MDC is widely recognized as one of the most effective and well-managed conservation agencies in the country. Its unique funding model ensures dedicated, stable support for wildlife conservation without reliance on the general revenue fund. MDC operates with remarkable efficiency, transparency, and public accountability, demonstrated through:

- Open meetings and public input processes that allow Missourians to engage with conservation decisions.
- Independent, science-driven decision-making that prioritizes long-term conservation over short-term political pressures.
- Proven fiscal responsibility, with a track record of sound investments in habitat restoration, public access, and education programs that benefit both rural and urban communities.

HJR 43 Undermines Conservation Success This proposal threatens MDC’s ability to continue this success in several ways:

1. **Politicizing Conservation Leadership** The resolution shifts the appointment process for MDC commissioners, injecting legislative influence into what has historically been a nonpartisan, science-driven commission. Requiring the governor to choose from a legislatively-approved list of candidates erodes the agency’s autonomy and opens the door for politically motivated appointments rather than selections based on conservation expertise.
2. **Diverting Critical Conservation Funding** The resolution redirects 20% of MDC’s dedicated conservation sales tax—a tax overwhelmingly supported by Missouri voters—to other agencies and local governments. While our state parks and local communities are important, this diversion undermines MDC’s ability to carry out habitat restoration, wildlife management, and conservation education. A reduction in funding could mean fewer conservation officers, less habitat management, and diminished public access to outdoor recreation.
3. **Unnecessary Legislative Oversight on Land Acquisition** MDC has successfully managed its lands for decades without legislative interference. The requirement that the General Assembly review and approve all land acquisitions and sales creates unnecessary delays and removes decision-making from conservation professionals. Conservation projects require long-term planning and swift action when land opportunities arise—waiting for political approval could

cause Missouri to lose critical conservation opportunities.⁴ **New Administrative Burdens Without Justification**
The bill adds new ethics reporting requirements and conflicts of interest provisions that go beyond existing state laws and place excessive burdens on MDC and its contractors.
MDC already operates under strict ethical guidelines and financial accountability measures. These new restrictions appear to be solutions in search of a problem, adding red tape without improving transparency.
A Solution in Search of a Problem
MDC has proven itself as a transparent, fiscally responsible, and highly effective agency. This resolution introduces political interference, bureaucratic hurdles, and funding diversions that could dismantle the very system that has made Missouri a national leader in conservation. Missourians have repeatedly affirmed their support for MDC's independent structure, including through the dedicated conservation sales tax, which was renewed by nearly two-thirds of voters. This proposal ignores the will of Missouri citizens and threatens to unravel decades of conservation success.
Conclusion
I urge you to reject House Joint Resolution No. 43. We should be strengthening MDC's ability to carry out its mission, not burdening it with unnecessary bureaucracy and political oversight. Missouri's wildlife, outdoor recreation economy, and future generations depend on MDC remaining independent, efficient, and science-driven. Thank you for your time, and I respectfully request a "No" vote on this resolution.



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WITNESS NAME		
INDIVIDUAL:		
WITNESS NAME: GARY L MARQUART		PHONE NUMBER:
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:
ADDRESS:		
CITY:		STATE: ZIP:
EMAIL: marquartg@charter.net	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/14/2025 12:29 PM
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Our Department of Conservation is viewed as one of the premier departments in the United States. Their success has been remarkable. There is no reason to screw it all up with this resolution. I do not see why they are a government entity being singled out to pay property taxes, unless you want to include MODOT and the State Parks in the mix as well. I see this as some sort of pet peeve issue that needs to go away, or the representative who has it needs to go away.



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WITNESS NAME		
INDIVIDUAL:		
WITNESS NAME: JACOB SWAFFORD		PHONE NUMBER:
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:
ADDRESS:		
CITY:		STATE: ZIP:
EMAIL: jake.swafford11@gmail.com	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/18/2025 10:34 AM

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I believe HJR 43 poses a significant threat to the unique and effective Missouri model of conservation, which has served the citizens of our state well for almost 90 years. As someone who has lived in other states and been involved in conservation, I can attest that Missouri's system, state agency, and access to natural resources are unparalleled! Our Conservation Commission has represented the people of the state well; any changes to its membership and structure, as proposed in HJR 43, will severely damage its ability to successfully serve the state. This will undermine Missouri's excellent conservation management structure, a prospect that should concern us all. I also do not support any currently proposed or future changes to the conservation sales tax, as they are not in the interest of our state's natural resources or sportsmen. This tax is a crucial source of funding for the Missouri Department of Conservation, allowing it to make long-term management decisions based on the best available science and the needs of the citizens it serves. Any threat to redirect funds will not only reduce the resources available for conservation but also shift power away from the experts at the Department to the legislature. Our conservation system is a proven success. Please oppose efforts to derail it by voting NO on HJR 43.



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: JAMES LOW		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 2/18/2025 12:00 AM	
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WITNESS NAME		
INDIVIDUAL:		
WITNESS NAME: JIM LOW		PHONE NUMBER:
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:
ADDRESS:		
CITY:		STATE: ZIP:
EMAIL: jimilow@aol.com	ATTENDANCE: In-Person	SUBMIT DATE: 2/18/2025 6:38 PM
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Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee: Every year about this time, I find myself here at the Capitol testifying in opposition to a bill that would undermine Missouri’s conservation program. It makes me wonder why this is, and I can only ever come up with two reasons. One explanation is ignorance. Maybe the sponsor of the bill hasn’t read Amendment 4 to the Missouri Constitution, establishing a four-member bi-partisan commission with sole constitutional authority to regulate the state’s forest, fish and wildlife resources. Knowing of the margin of victory of this amendment – 70 percent – might give pause to anyone considering legislation that threatens the Conservation Commission’s authority. Missourians went to a lot of trouble circulating initiative petitions and campaigning for passage of that amendment. They were horrified by the condition of the state’s wild resources. Up until 1935, Missouri’s game and fish regulations were written by the General Assembly, and to say they had made a mess of things is a colossal understatement. Under the supervision of state legislators, deer and turkey had disappeared from most of the state, and the state’s forests were a pitiful remnant of its historic extent. Hunters, anglers, nature lovers, even hard-core business people could see where things were headed, and they understood that continuing down that path would be disastrous in ways that went far beyond their ability to hunt and fish. So, they devised a sensible system of conservation governance based on science, and they set it up in a way that prevented legislators from messing with it. They took that proposal to the people through the initiative petition process and voters resoundingly approved it. This isn’t just my interpretation of events. The folks who set up the Conservation Commission were very explicit about the role the General Assembly had played in ruining the state’s wild resources and their commitment to ensuring it never happened again. Now, I understand why individual legislators get the urge to meddle in conservation matters. You have to listen to your constituents. When a guy who has hunted quail for 50 years tells you he knows more about quail management than some college-educated egghead biologist, and suggests that you increase or decrease the length of quail season, you have to listen to him. When the owner of a high-fence deer breeding and shooting operation hollers that regulations designed to contain the spread of Chronic Wasting Disease will cost him money, you have to listen to him, too. But none of that changes the fact that an overwhelming majority of Missourians put control of game laws in the hands of the Conservation Commission. Getting pressure from special interests who want to control conservation policy doesn’t make it okay to ignore the will of the people and waste conservation funding defending a system that Missourians are justifiably proud of. Yet, year after year, I find myself here testifying against destructive and often unconstitutional bills that would throw a monkey wrench in the machinery that has restored forests, fish and wildlife so thoroughly that those once-depleted resources now support forestry and tourism industries worth billions of dollars and create tens of thousands of jobs annually. And again, I ask myself, why? The other answer is more troubling, but I find it inescapable. Some of our state legislators simply don’t care about the Missouri State Constitution or what an overwhelming

majority of Missouri citizens want. All they care about is what THEY want. For one thing, they want to get their hands on money that Missouri citizens set aside through another initiative petition drive, amending the State Constitution to establish a one-eighth of one percent sales tax for conservation. Every year we hear legislators making noise about tapping that money for their pet projects. And by the way, let's just think for a moment about how much they could accomplish with a pool of money that amounts to less than 1 percent of the state's total budget. The answer is, next to nothing. Another important motivation might be the desire to hand out favors to influential people and corporate donors who can help them politically, and let the resources be damned. That is precisely why Missourians took control of those resources away from the legislature. And it's why they get hopping mad when a bill like HJR 43 comes up. When that happens, I always hear vague statements about constituents who have complaints about the Conservation Department. That the agency's freedom from political interference has made it inefficient and unresponsive to citizens. I look around and wonder, where is the ground swell of discontent and the agitating to give General Assembly virtual veto power over conservation regulations? There is none. According to independent polling, three-quarters of Missourians approve of the way the Conservation Commission is handling things. If history teaches us anything, it's that there is no curbing politicians' lust for power, so I guess Missourians will have to keep beating back bills like HJR 43. But there is a cure for ignorance. With that in mind, I would like to recommend some homework for our state legislators. I would love it if every state representative and senator were required to read Amendment 4 to our state constitution. It's available at Missouri River Regional Library just down the street. It's available through the Missouri State Library and the Missouri State Archives. You might even have a copy in your office. It's the clearest evidence I can imagine of why the bill under discussion today should be deposited in the nearest trash bin, and why all of you on this committee should politely tell anyone who sponsors such a bill that doing so disrespects Missouri voters and the Missouri Constitution. Not to mention the fact that it would inevitably destroy the conservation progress that has made Missouri the envy of the nation. Amendment 4 is also conveniently printed in "The First 50 Years," in which the late James Keefe documented the early history of conservation in Missouri. Furthermore, a detailed account of how the legislature almost squandered Missourians' natural legacy is documented in "Man and Wildlife in Missouri," by the late conservation luminary Charles Callison. His history details how Missouri came to the brink of natural calamity and the role that politics played in that barely averted disaster. If, on the other hand, you choose to remain ignorant, that's fine. But don't think for a moment that the Conservation Federation of Missouri and its 80,000 member and its nonprofit and commercial – yes commercial - affiliates won't be there at every turn to stand in the way when legislators who can't be bothered with the truth, or the good of the people they represent, introduce bills that would harm what we have fought to protect for 80 years. And don't underestimate the effect that continuing to attack Missouri's overwhelmingly popular conservation program might have on your political future. Thank you for listening. James Low2500 Dogwood Bluff Drive Jefferson City, MO 65109



MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WITNESS APPEARANCE FORM

BILL NUMBER: HJR 43		DATE: 2/18/2025	
COMMITTEE: Government Efficiency			
TESTIFYING: <input type="checkbox"/> IN SUPPORT OF <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IN OPPOSITION TO <input type="checkbox"/> FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES			
WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: KENDRA VARNS WALLIS		PHONE NUMBER: 816-210-3413	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: MISSOURI PARKS ASSOCIATION		TITLE: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	
ADDRESS: P.O. BOX 8531			
CITY: KANSAS CITY		STATE: MO	ZIP: 66214
EMAIL: kendra.wallis@missouriparks.org	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/17/2025 4:11 PM	

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Missouri Parks Association is in opposition to HJR 43 that proposes a constitutional amendment changing the membership of the conservation commission, the conservation sales and use tax, and the department of conservation's property tax exemption.



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TESTIFYING: <input type="checkbox"/> IN SUPPORT OF <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IN OPPOSITION TO <input type="checkbox"/> FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES		
WITNESS NAME		
INDIVIDUAL:		
WITNESS NAME: KYLE CARROLL		PHONE NUMBER:
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:
ADDRESS:		
CITY:		STATE: ZIP:
EMAIL: kyle.i.carroll@gmail.com	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/13/2025 7:03 PM
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I oppose the attempt to take funds from the Department of Conservation and to change the make up of the Conservation Commission as described in this bill.



MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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COMMITTEE: Government Efficiency			
TESTIFYING: <input type="checkbox"/> IN SUPPORT OF <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IN OPPOSITION TO <input type="checkbox"/> FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES			
WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: MARK ZURBRICK		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: mzurbrick@gmail.com	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/18/2025 1:11 PM	
THE INFORMATION ON THIS FORM IS PUBLIC RECORD UNDER CHAPTER 610, RSMo.			

In 1937, the citizens of Missouri voted overwhelmingly to amend the state’s constitution, taking the obvious mismanagement of the state’s vanishing forests, fish and wildlife away from politicians by creating the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC), whose sole responsibility was to recover our diminished fish and wildlife resources using sound science, rather than partisan politics. In less than four decades, the MDC’s science-based management had brought back many species from the brink of extinction, including popular game species such as deer and turkey. Citizen demonstrated their satisfaction of MDC in 1976 when taxpayers/voters again amended the state constitution, allowing revenues from a 1/8 cent sales tax to continue and expand the department’s acclaimed and successful programs. Today, MDC is recognized as one of the best, if not the best, fish and game agencies in the country. This leads hunters, anglers, and citizen conservationist, such as myself, to say “if it ain’t broke... don’t fix it”. Would not our elected legislators time and effort be better spent on addressing important issues and other agencies in much more need of change and improvement? Please address the needs of our schools, roads, law enforcement, economy, health care, etc. and let MDC continue to do an outstanding job of managing our natural resources.I have several specific concerns or observations about the wording found in HJR 43. 1. Our state parks already receive revenue from a citizen approved 1/10 cent sales tax. How will transferring some of MDC’s 1/8 cent tax to parks benefit hunters and anglers?2. Doesn’t MDC already pay counties for lands within a county via Payment in Lieu of Taxes program? Also these conservation areas attract outdoor folks from urban areas, who then spend dollars in the rural counties for lodging, food, guides, etc. 3. Who would a majority of citizens wish to determine what lands are needed to meet the habitat needs of fish and wildlife... local politicians or biologists/scientists with statewide responsibilities? Please reject HJR 125 and support the best conservation department in the country. Thank You for Your Consideration,Mark ZurbrickNewburg, MO



MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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COMMITTEE: Government Efficiency			
TESTIFYING: <input type="checkbox"/> IN SUPPORT OF <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IN OPPOSITION TO <input type="checkbox"/> FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES			
WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: MELISSA VATTEROTT		PHONE NUMBER: 314-581-0561	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: MISSOURI COALITION FOR THE ENVIRONMENT		TITLE: DIRECTOR OF POLICY AND STRATEGY	
ADDRESS: 725 KINGSLAND AVE SUITE 100			
CITY: UNIVERSITY CITY		STATE: MO	ZIP: 63130
EMAIL: mvatterott@moenvironment.org	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/18/2025 11:58 AM	
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This resolution threatens the independence and effectiveness of Missouri's Department of Conservation by politicizing its management and diverting critical funding away from conservation efforts. By giving the General Assembly control over land purchases and sales, and reallocating funds meant for wildlife and natural resource preservation, HJR 43 undermines decades of successful, science-based conservation practices. Stand up for conservation and the future of Missouri's wildlife and parks. Vote "no" on HJR 43.



MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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TESTIFYING: <input type="checkbox"/> IN SUPPORT OF <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IN OPPOSITION TO <input type="checkbox"/> FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES		
WITNESS NAME		
INDIVIDUAL:		
WITNESS NAME: SHIRLEY WOLVERSON		PHONE NUMBER:
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:
ADDRESS:		
CITY:		STATE: ZIP:
EMAIL: wolverson9@aol.com	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/18/2025 12:10 AM

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HJR 43 seeks to undo the will of the people as amended to the constitution, by changing the composition of the Missouri Conservation Commission and shifting the constitutional authority granted to the commission by a vote of the people decades ago to remove protection of Missouri's wildlife and game species from politicians - back to the legislature. It also proposes to steal 20% of sales tax receipts, designated by voters for the Department of Conservation, and redirect it. I strongly OPPOSE this attempt to change the Commission, give undeserved authority to the legislature over the Department of Conservation, and steal designated tax funds. Please vote NO on HJR 43



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WITNESS NAME		
INDIVIDUAL:		
WITNESS NAME: STEPHEN W. MCMILLAN		PHONE NUMBER:
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:
ADDRESS:		
CITY:		STATE: ZIP:
EMAIL: steve@swmcmillan.com	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/17/2025 1:18 PM
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The current structure of the Conservation Commission has worked well since its inception, and it has been defended in every legislative challenge by a clear majority of Missourians who rightly believe that this system is not broken and serves the constituents of the state as intended. The independence of the Department of Conservation from political influence is CRITICAL, and the proposed HJR 43 legislation simply erodes the function and effectiveness of the commission, the Conservation Sales and Use Tax revenue and the conservation of our public lands. I urge you to please OPPOSE this legislation.



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WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: STEVE JONES		PHONE NUMBER: 314-420-8087	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: CONSERVATION FEDERATION OF MISSOURI		TITLE: VICE PRESIDENT	
ADDRESS: 728 W. MAIN			
CITY: JEFFERSON CITY		STATE: MO	ZIP: 65101
EMAIL: SteveJones@spjones.com	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/18/2025 12:25 PM	

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Testimony submitted by Steve Jones - Vice President of the Conservation Federation of Missouri, to the Government Efficiency Committee on February 18, 2025 HJR 43 is clearly intended to subject a nearly century-old protected constitutional mandate to the will of the legislature. Just a couple of years ago, the Missouri Supreme Court (with a Republican majority) declared in Conservation Commission v Bailey: "The plain language of Article IV, sections 40-44 makes clear the people's intent to grant the Conservation Commission plenary authority to expend and use conservation funds for certain enumerated purposes without legislative discretion." The bottom line is that HJR 43 seeks to shift conservation policy back into the legislature, where it didn't work out so well for Missouri last time. It would shift from the proven non-politicized model by which each Commissioner represents the combined conservation interests of all Missourians, to a politicized model in which each commissioner represents one Congressional district. This will lead to competition and confusion - hardly a recipe for the "efficiency" for which this committee is named. The addition of the language requiring knowledge of "... the state's natural resources... " in front of " ... wildlife conservation ..." is mysterious. The Commission runs the Department of Conservation, not the Department of Natural Resources. I would hope the intended impact of that change will be discussed by the committee prior to any vote. The language regarding any Commissioner receiving any item of value casts a shadow over the integrity of everyone who ever served in that role. It targets unpaid persons who volunteered for a 6-year obligation with significant time-consuming duties. The way I read it, Commissioners wouldn't be allowed to even accept a cup of coffee at a meeting. Unless there is a known history of problems with Commissioner ethics, this language is uncalled for. One other curiosity is the removal of the Senate's "advice & consent" role in gubernatorial appointments to the Conservation Commission. I hope the author will explain his intention. Last but certainly not least, the 20% forced redistribution of Conservation funds to other entities is frankly an insult to the clear intention of the voters who approved the Conservation Sales Tax back in 1976. Missouri voters are rightfully proud of our conservation heritage. The CFM shares that pride and opposes HJR 43, as we would any other attempt to erode the authority of the Conservation Commission, which has served the state so well for so long. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.



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WITNESS NAME		
INDIVIDUAL:		
WITNESS NAME: TARA HALLMARK		PHONE NUMBER:
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:
ADDRESS:		
CITY:		STATE: ZIP:
EMAIL: mzbamahallmark@outlook.com	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/18/2025 3:14 PM

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I am in Strong opposition to this bill for common sense reasons and historic reflection of respect for Missouri Constitution being for people before corporations. This blatant legislative retaliation, fund funneling bullying, mass medical stress inducing towards hard working folks/families, Missouri Court rulings and constant spending of tax money for outside influences must have recognition if there is no stopping or recourse. HJR 43 lies to all about lack of legislative influence and oversight with MODOT. The ultimate action in itself to have the ability to change the Missouri Constitution shows resounding intent. MODOT has suffered recently and constantly from State of MO legislation and won in Missouri court for doing their job in the face of the same legislation taking away medical benefits and pensions. The Missouri Senate approves of the Governor's MODOT commissioner; which has been a majority ruling Republican Party for a decade. The same supermajority party passed a gas tax after being voted down twice by the people when the 1990/91 15 year gas tax expired. The checks and balance for the hard working families and employees of roads and bridges should not have to endure the constant political bullying to validate and justify over and over and over; just because the party is in power has a beef and want complete control of the money. The lack of support, the lack of strong funding and the lack of respect for the economics MODOT folks in our communities is seen by the nice pretty roads near factories. As our volunteer responders drive down dirt rutted roads to get to the station and respond to JBS or other corporations enjoying 100% state tax credits to offset federal taxes. I am in strong opposition to this bill. Let this be the last bill that antagonizes MODOT; the professionals and the ones doing the job. Please fund and support our MODOT and state employees health/pension, they our neighbors, your taxpayers and voters.



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WITNESS NAME		
INDIVIDUAL:		
WITNESS NAME: TOM WESTHOFF		PHONE NUMBER:
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:
ADDRESS:		
CITY:		STATE: ZIP:
EMAIL: westhoff@windstream.net	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/18/2025 10:17 AM
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I oppose HJR 43. The Mo Dept of Conservation is one of the few agencies that do a good job. There has been no legal issues with the Conservation Department that I know of since its inception in 1938. The 4 commissioner system works very well so there is no need to increase the size of the Commission. The people of Mo voted to establish the funding system so there is no need to change.



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WITNESS NAME		
REGISTERED LOBBYIST:		
WITNESS NAME: TYLER SCHWARTZE		PHONE NUMBER: 573-634-2322
REPRESENTING: CONSERVATION FEDERATION OF MISSOURI		TITLE:
ADDRESS: 728 W. MAIN ST.		
CITY: JC	STATE: MO	ZIP: 65101
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 2/18/2025 12:00 AM
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MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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WITNESS NAME		
INDIVIDUAL:		
WITNESS NAME: VICTORIA VENTRELLA-MEYER		PHONE NUMBER:
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:
ADDRESS:		
CITY:		STATE: ZIP:
EMAIL: irun4hope927@hotmail.com	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/18/2025 3:58 PM
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I feel that the current makeup and process of the Conservation Commission is in the best interest of the state and the taxpayers, and do not wish to see it changed.



MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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WITNESS NAME		
INDIVIDUAL:		
WITNESS NAME: VIRGINIA K WALLACE		PHONE NUMBER:
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:
ADDRESS:		
CITY:		STATE: ZIP:
EMAIL: ginny.k.wallace@gmail.com	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/18/2025 8:57 AM
THE INFORMATION ON THIS FORM IS PUBLIC RECORD UNDER CHAPTER 610, RSMo.		

Thank you for this opportunity for me to register my opposition to HJR 43. First, this proposed constitutional amendment would discard the most important aspect of Missourians’ original intent in setting up their conservation program. Missouri voters were careful to enshrine their system of conservation governance not in law, but in the state constitution. They knew that if the agency was established by statute, their will could be undone easily by passage of new laws. They intentionally made it as difficult as possible for politicians to overturn their will. The revised system of choosing Conservation Commission members that is proposed in this bill is guaranteed to promote regional conflict, inefficiency and even corruption in setting conservation policy. Missourians are not merely proud of their conservation program; they have overwhelming confidence – as shown through independent surveys – in how that program is administered for the benefit of ALL Missourians under the current system. Second, diverting money that voters specifically earmarked for conservation and using it for state parks and local governments serves no purpose. Missourians have given the state park system its own dedicated revenue source, and they expect the Division of State Parks to live within that budget, just as the Conservation Department does. Local political entities have their own funding mechanisms. Again, the proposed amendment aims to reverse voters’ will, introducing politics into what has, until now been a non-partisan, science-based conservation program. Finally, I object to the idea of letting the legislature control land acquisition for conservation. This would substitute politics for the strategic planning that now guides scientific resource management and public access to outdoor recreation. Think for a moment about how the legislature has functioned in recent years. Factionalism, favoritism and petty grievance have made sensible governing all but impossible. Missourians in their wisdom saw the likelihood of such nonsense and resolved never again to allow stewardship of their irreplaceable resources to be dragged into that swamp. Over a 41-year career in natural resources, I have had the opportunity to work with resource professionals from across the nation, and to observe their challenges and compare their experience with Missouri’s accomplishments. Our record stands head and shoulders above the rest. If you don’t believe me, ask any conservation official from another state what they think. Countless times over the years, conservation professionals from other states have expressed to me how they envy the “Missouri Plan.” In closing, I will leave you with a question: What drives this perennial urge to upend the nation’s most successful conservation program? Why are you trying to fix something that so clearly is not broken?



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WITNESS NAME		
INDIVIDUAL:		
WITNESS NAME: WILLIAM C KIRGAN		PHONE NUMBER:
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:
ADDRESS:		
CITY:		STATE: ZIP:
EMAIL: billkirgan@gmail.com	ATTENDANCE: Written	SUBMIT DATE: 2/18/2025 9:14 AM
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I am opposed to this bill for several reasons including the distribution of MDC funds for other agencies, restrictions on their ability to purchase lands, the reconfiguration of the commission and others. The short version is, our current Commission is the envy of many states and is one in which Mo can be proud. It's not broke- don't try and fix it.



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: ZACH MORRIS		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:		SUBMIT DATE: 2/18/2025 12:00 AM
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TESTIFYING: <input type="checkbox"/> IN SUPPORT OF <input type="checkbox"/> IN OPPOSITION TO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES		
WITNESS NAME		
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:		
WITNESS NAME: AARON JEFFRIES		PHONE NUMBER: 573-751-4115
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION		TITLE: DEPUTY DIRECTOR
ADDRESS: PO BOX 180		
CITY: JEFFERSON CITY		STATE: MO
		ZIP: 65102
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: 2/18/2025 12:00 AM
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