

Date of Hearing: April 14, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON WATER, PARKS, AND WILDLIFE

Diane Papan, Chair

AB 2207 (Hadwick) – As Amended April 6, 2026

SUBJECT: Hunting tags: transfer: youth and disabled veteran participation programs

SUMMARY: Requires the Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) to establish hunting tag transfer programs for transfers to specified family members and transfers to specified nonprofit organizations. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Requires CDFW to establish a hunting tag transfer program that authorizes a person to transfer a tag, subject to the following conditions:
 - a) The tag is for big game (deer, elk, bear, pronghorn antelope, or bighorn sheep);
 - b) The transferor is the parent, legal guardian, or grandparent of the transferee;
 - c) On the date of the transfer, the transferee is 17 years of age or younger, possesses a valid hunting license, and is otherwise eligible to obtain the applicable tag;
 - d) The transferee is accompanied during the take by a parent, legal guardian, or grandparent;
 - e) Any loss of preference points and future tag drawing eligibility applies only to the transferor and not to the transferee;
 - f) CDFW may collect a fee from the transferor to cover the reasonable cost of transferring the tag and deposit the revenues from the fee into the Big Game Management Account; and
 - g) CDFW may adopt regulations to implement the program.
- 2) Requires CDFW to establish a hunting tag transfer program that authorizes a nonprofit organization to facilitate the transfer of a tag, subject to the following conditions:
 - a) The organization meets the following requirements:
 - i) Is exempt from taxation under 26 United States Code § 501(c)(3);
 - ii) Has goals and objectives directly related to the management and conservation of fish, big game, upland game, and migratory game species;
 - iii) Primarily represents the interests of licensed hunters;
 - iv) Provides hunting opportunities to youth with life-threatening illnesses or permanent physical disabilities or to disabled veterans;
 - v) Has a demonstrated history of providing hunting opportunities to any of the persons described above;

- vi) Meets any other eligibility criteria established by CDFW; and
 - vii) Is registered with CDFW for the purposes of the program.
- b) The recipient of the tag is either a youth with a life-threatening illness or permanent physical disability who, on the date of the take, will be 17 years of age or younger, or a disabled veteran, defined as a person having a 50 percent or greater service-connected disability and an honorable discharge from military service;
 - c) The recipient of the tag possesses a valid hunting license and is otherwise eligible to obtain the applicable tag;
 - d) The donated tag is for big game;
 - e) The organization provides a request to CDFW containing the following:
 - i) A signed written statement from the tag holder stating they are voluntarily donating the tag to an eligible recipient identified by the organization;
 - ii) Proof, as determined by CDFW, that the recipient meets the eligibility criteria in (b) and (c);
 - iii) The unused tag; and
 - iv) A description of the hunting opportunity to be provided.
 - f) CDFW transfers the tag from the donor to the recipient upon receipt of all of the information in (e);
 - g) The organization provides a hunting opportunity to the tag recipient that allows for the person to take the animal authorized by the applicable tag;
 - h) If the tag recipient is a child, the child is accompanied by their parent, grandparent, or legal guardian, or any combination of those persons, and a person from the organization during the take of the animal;
 - i) Any loss of preference points applies only to the transferor and not to the transferee;
 - j) CDFW may collect a fee from the organization to cover the reasonable cost of transferring the tag and deposit the revenues from the fee into the Big Game Management Account; and
 - k) CDFW may adopt regulations to implement the program.
- 3) Provides that the two tag transfer programs above are authorized notwithstanding the general prohibition on the transfer of hunting tags.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Establishes CDFW to manage California's diverse fish, wildlife, and plant resources, and the habitats upon which they depend, for their ecological values and for their use and enjoyment of the public [Fish and Game Code (FGC) § 712.1].
- 2) Requires every person engaged in taking any bird, mammal, fish, amphibian, or reptile to have in their immediate possession any required license, tag, stamp, or permit (FGC § 1054.2).
- 3) Authorizes CDFW to issue hunting tags for pronghorn antelope, elk, deer, bear, and bighorn sheep (FGC §§ 331, 332, 4332, 4751, and 4902).
- 4) Authorizes CDFW to set the terms and conditions under which any permit, license, tag, reservation application, or other entitlement shall be issued under the FGC (FGC § 1050).
- 5) Provides that it is unlawful for any person to transfer any license, tag, stamp, permit, application, or reservation, or to use or possess any license, tag, stamp, permit, application, or reservation that was not lawfully issued to the user (FGC § 1052).
- 6) Establishes the Big Game Management Account to receive revenues from the sale of big game tags and validations and to be expended for purposes including acquiring land, completing projects, and implementing programs to benefit antelope, elk, deer, bear, and sheep, or the use of hunting to manage wild pigs, and expanding public hunting opportunities and related public outreach (FGC § 3953).

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown. This bill is keyed fiscal.

COMMENTS:

- 1) **Purpose of this bill.** According to the author, “[This bill] focuses on improving access to hunting opportunities for families and for terminally ill and disabled kids and veterans. This bill is about making sure the traditions of hunting do not fade away, especially for the next generation. If an adult in the family draws a tag but can’t use it, [this bill] would allow them to pass that opportunity down to a young hunter in the same hunt—so that the chance to learn and participate does not go to waste. This bill would make it easier for young hunters to get out in the field with their dad or grandpa—learning the skills, the respect for the land, and the stories that come with it. This bill helps keep California’s hunting heritage alive.”
- 2) **Background.** CDFW issues tags for five big game mammals (pronghorn antelope, elk, deer, bear, and bighorn sheep); a tag is required, in addition to a hunting license, to hunt these species. As the number of interested hunters far exceeds the quota numbers for some of these species, drawings are held using a modified-preference point system for premium deer, elk, pronghorn antelope, and bighorn sheep hunts (14 California Code of Regulations § 708.14). In 2024, one drawing for a bighorn sheep hunt drew 1,913 applicants for a single quota spot, and many hunts across species drew hundreds of applicants for single-digit quota spots. Additionally, hunters are limited to a single tag per year for bear, elk, and pronghorn antelope, two tags per year for deer, and a single tag per lifetime for bighorn sheep.

As a result of the drawing process, obtaining a big game tag in California can be very challenging. Under the modified-preference point system, applicants who enter a drawing but are unsuccessful accumulate a “preference point,” which improves that applicant’s odds in

subsequent years (for each hunt, a portion of tags are drawn randomly from all applicants, and a portion are drawn from the pool of applicants with the most preference points). When an applicant is drawn for a tag, they lose all accumulated preference points for that species. As a result, tags are precious, and very few elk, pronghorn antelope, and bighorn sheep hunters do not attempt to hunt (Table 1).

Table 1. Big game tag outcomes from 2012-2025 for species subject to modified-preference point drawing based on postseason hunter reports. Excludes SHARE hunts. (CDFW)

Species	Number Sold	Successful Hunt	Unsuccessful Hunt	Did Not Hunt
Pronghorn Antelope	3116	2374	525	70
Elk	8312	5934	1213	14
Bighorn Sheep	328	257	15	1

Young people in particular face long odds, as they will have far fewer preference points than hunters who have been entering drawings for decades. In 2025, many hunts had more maximum point applicants (hunters with 23 years of unsuccessful drawings) than quota spots, meaning that anyone with 23 or fewer points could only hope to win the very small number of random tags. For these young hunters, there is limited prospect of improvement to their poor odds for many years (i.e., someone with 3 points currently will likely be 20 points behind the maximum point total for many more years).

Occasionally, however, life does get in the way. Whether a personal conflict or health concerns prevent hunting (bighorn sheep hunts, for instance, occur mostly in extremely rugged terrain above 10,000 feet in elevation), sometimes hunters are unable to use the tags they have been awarded.

Under existing law, if a hunter is unable to hunt for any reason, they may, before the season begins, return their tag to CDFW for a refund and reinstatement of preference points. Tag return to CDFW is the only lawful option currently available to hunters who are unable to use their tags (other than simply not utilizing the tag), as transfer of the tag to any other person is prohibited (see Existing Law #5).

- 3) **Policy consideration.** As discussed above, when a hunter wins a tag drawing, they lose all accumulated preference points and, in the case of bighorn sheep, permanently lose eligibility to win another tag. The transfer of tags between parties introduces ambiguity about what happens to both parties' accumulated preference points and eligibility. Section 2 of this bill, addressing transfers between a parent, grandparent, or legal guardian and a child, addresses this ambiguity by specifying that the loss of points and eligibility both apply only to the transferor, not the transferee. In contrast, Section 3 of this bill, addressing transfers facilitated by a nonprofit organization, only specifies that the loss of points applies only to the transferor, while remaining silent on the loss of eligibility. The author may wish to consider an amendment to specify that any loss of eligibility applies only to the transferor in both cases.

- 4) **Arguments in support.** The California Rifle and Pistol Association writes: “Unfortunately, many families face situations where a parent or grandparent draws a valuable tag (such as for deer, elk, or pronghorn) but cannot hunt due to health, work, or other unforeseen circumstances. Under current rules, that tag often goes unused, wasting a precious opportunity and reducing participation by the next generation. [This bill] provides a practical, targeted solution by facilitating tag transfers specifically for youth, helping more young Californians experience the outdoors, learn sustainable wildlife management, and develop a lifelong connection to conservation.”
- 5) **Related legislation.** SB 1021 (Choi) of the current legislative session requires the Fish and Game Commission to establish a program to increase opportunities to fish and to hunt big game, upland game birds, and migratory game birds for youth with life-threatening illnesses. SB 1021 is pending in the Senate Appropriations Committee after passing the Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee by a vote of 7-0 on March 24, 2026.

AB 2523 (Gray) of 2020, would have required the Fish and Game Commission to establish a program to increase opportunities to fish and to hunt big game, upland game birds, and migratory game birds for youth with life-threatening illnesses and youth who lost a parent in service to the state or country. AB 2523 was held in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

California Rifle and Pistol Association

Opposition

None on file

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