



COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY  
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Andy Beshear  
GOVERNOR

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**VETO MESSAGE FROM THE**  
**GOVERNOR OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY**  
**REGARDING HOUSE BILL 344 OF THE**  
**2022 REGULAR SESSION**

*I, Andy Beshear, Governor of the Commonwealth of Kentucky, pursuant to the authority granted under section 88 of the Kentucky Constitution, do hereby veto the following:*

House Bill 344 of the 2022 Regular Session of the General Assembly in its entirety.

*I am vetoing House Bill 344 because it gives the Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources the authority to allow third party entities to sell licenses and permits for the department without following the procurement process under KRS Chapter 45A and without competitive bidding. House Bill 344 eliminates the requirement that the department sell its own licenses or permits and instead provides that the department "may" sell its own licenses or permits, and broadens the entities outside of the department that are eligible to be agents for the sale of licenses and permits. Under House Bill 344, the department may name any other persons, governmental entities, businesses, or organizations to sell licenses or permits, which expands the current law that allows any other person or organization to be named an agent.*

*As multiple Kentucky Sporstmen and Sportswomen from across the Commonwealth and organizations representing them have stated in requesting that I veto House Bill 344, the bill gives a department with a history of not properly following procurement law the ability to completely hand over the licensing and permitting process that accounts for 95 percent (95%) of the department's funds to third party entities outside of Kentucky. House Bill 344 would permit this result without following any procurement process, without requiring any written agreement between the department and the third party entity, and without any oversight of the actions of the third party entity.*

*This unchecked authority follows the enactment of Senate Bill 217 during this Regular Session over my veto, which gives the commissioner of the department sole power over procurement and all personnel appointments in the department. As I stated in my veto message for Senate Bill 217, a brief review of the department's recent procurement abuses explains why oversight is necessary, and why Kentucky Sportsmen and Sportswomen have objected to giving sole authority to the commissioner. In December of 2018, the Kentucky Auditor of Public Accounts called for "a change in culture" at the Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources after releasing a report*

*that found the department had not complied with state and federal law in its use of public funds, including deliberately circumventing procurement laws.*

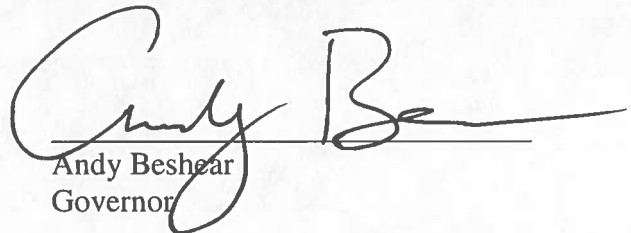
*In addition, House Bill 344 does not require any agent the commissioner designates to sell licenses or permits to keep a correct and complete record of all licenses and permits applied for or issued, or all other records that Kentucky law requires to be kept. In fact, the bill expressly removes any such agent from the requirement under current law that license and permit records be public records that must be open to public inspection under the Kentucky Open Records Act. Thus, House Bill 344 allows third party entities to sell licenses or permits without any transparency.*

*Fish and wildlife resources are important to Kentuckians, who have a constitutional right to hunt, fish, and harvest wildlife. The Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources is a significant part of state government that serves Kentucky Sportsmen and Sportswomen. Those sportsmen and sportswomen should have confidence in how the department and its commissioner administer the licenses and fees they pay to support much of the department's work. My administration values the heritage of hunting and fishing, and encourages more participation by all Kentuckian, but the provisions of House Bill 344 that erode transparency and accountability in the sale of licenses and permits outweigh the improvements in other provisions of the bill.*

*House Bill 344 is another example of legislation that undermines the trust and confidence Kentuckians, especially the Kentucky Sportsmen and Sportswomen who the department is supposed to serve, should have that their government is exercising care in the use of public funds.*

*For these reasons, I am vetoing House Bill 344.*

This, the 25<sup>th</sup> day of April, 2022.

  
Andy Beshear  
Governor