

To Whom It May Concern,

I want to start out by apologizing for not being able to attend this event in person. If there was any way in my power to be there in attendance I would prefer to have given my opinion on this matter in person. I am facing some medical issues that have me confined to bed rest, so once again I apologize and want to thank you for allowing this letter to be read on my behalf.

My name is Specialist Andrew Pike (ret). I was catastrophically injured in Iraq while serving with in the 1st of the 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment; 82nd Airborne Division. On March 26, 2007 while on a routine foot patrol I was shot and paralyzed by an enemy sniper. Since this day I have been confined to a manual wheelchair and have found ways to adapt to continue to do the things I enjoy.

I am writing today to speak out and support an event, and a program that has forever impacted my life. Several years ago I was blessed with the opportunity to take part in the hunt set up through the Idaho Division of Veteran Affairs (IDVA). I was not just blessed with a hunt, but a life changing experience that is still apart of my life to this day. I had a world-class experience through this hunt and established friendships that have still continued.

I am understanding that the State is proposing to take the two tags given to the Idaho Division of Veteran Affairs and reduce this to one tag while offering the second tag as a random drawing for non-profits. I think this is a huge mistake on part of the State of Idaho. The IDVA's establish program has proven itself to be effective and is getting these tags to Idaho's most severe veterans. I have undergone this process, and I can say that the IDVA's process is the most thorough application process that leaves no questions on if the veteran is eligible and deserving of this opportunity. I have seen firsthand of how other organizations select veterans to participate, and I thin you would be doing Idaho veterans a dis-service to remove one of these tags and put it in the hands of a non-responsible party. The VA ensures that the veteran left his/her service honorably and meets VA disability/injury requirements. I think this is the best way to make sure that these tags are going to actual veterans. Additionally this process helps keep veterans in touch with the VA and the help/aide they need.

In closing, I think that we should not change this process and should keep the VA in charge of these special purpose tags and this process. I do not think that it could be done any better, or be more memorable. Please do not take the experiences I had away from our future veterans, they deserve these opportunities.