

Allowing Kickapoo tribe to hunt certain deer for religious rites on any day

HB 971 by T. King (Uresti)

DIGEST: HB 971 would have allowed a documented member of the Kickapoo Traditional Tribe of Texas who held a hunting license to hunt antlerless white-tailed deer for religious ceremonial purposes on any day of the year between one-half hour before sunrise and one-half hour after sunset.

**GOVERNOR'S
REASON FOR
VETO:**

House Bill No. 971 would require the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) to issue a year-round license exclusively to members of the Kickapoo Traditional Tribe of Texas for hunting antlerless white-tailed deer. This would circumvent TPWD authority to regulate hunting and wildlife management in the State of Texas.

RESPONSE:

Rep. Tracy King, the bill's author, said: "I was surprised at the veto, since HB 971 would have given the Kickapoo Traditional Tribe of Texas the fundamental right to freely express their sincerely held religious beliefs through traditional ceremonies. The bill had been narrowly drafted to limit the hunting of antlerless white-tailed deer to Kickapoo land or to land where explicit permission had been granted by the private landowner and only in the quantities their Texas hunting license permitted. Freedom of religion is an important issue to all Texans, and I will continue to serve District 80 to protect every citizen's rights."

Sen. Carlos Uresti, the Senate sponsor, said: "I am disappointed in Gov. Perry's veto of HB 971. This was negotiated language developed to resolve a barrier to the religious practices of the Kickapoo Traditional Tribe of Texas. TPWD was consulted in the process of fine-tuning this language, and some of the TPWD's suggestions were incorporated. With this veto, Gov. Perry ensures that Texas law will continue to prevent the Kickapoo from conducting religious and ceremonial rites, as prescribed by Kickapoo religion, oral tradition, and tribal custom."

NOTES:

HB 971 was analyzed in Part One of the April 25 *Daily Floor Report*.

A substantially similar bill, HB 2159 by Garza (Madla), was enacted by the 78th Legislature during the 2003 regular session and also was vetoed by Gov. Perry.