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House of Representatives
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
HARRISBURG

Member
75th Legislative District

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December 14, 2010

MEMORANDUM

TO: All House Members

FROM: Representative Matt Gabler *MG*

SUBJECT: Introduction of Legislation – Shooting Range Protection Act

As a resident of rural Pennsylvania, I am keenly aware of the importance of shooting sports in the rich outdoor heritage of our Commonwealth. It is important that we preserve safe and responsible opportunities for citizens to participate in these activities in accordance with the rights that have been guaranteed by Section 21 of Article I of the Pennsylvania Constitution as well as the Second Amendment to the United States Constitution.

It has come to my attention that there are a number of shooting ranges that have been in operation on public land within the Commonwealth for decades that have provided generations of our citizens with valuable and safe opportunities to participate in and learn about shooting sports. Unfortunately, recent actions by the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) have placed the future of these ranges in jeopardy. The president of a club that operates a shooting range on state park property brought these issues—which have resulted in a five-year shutdown of their range—to my attention. In this specific example, the range has been in existence since before the state park was established and the equipment on the range is the private property of the club. While DCNR claims their shutdown is intended to be temporary, they have given no indication as to when the range may be able to reopen.

It is apparent that shooting ranges which are located on public land, but operated by entities other than the public agencies responsible for the land, are in need of protection. While it is important to ensure that the proper Commonwealth agencies retain the ability to temporarily suspend shooting activities to make necessary range improvements and protect the surrounding public, without some limitation on the scope and frequency of these suspensions, a shooting range may be subject to the whims and caprices of its government landlord.

In the near future, I intend to introduce the Shooting Range Protection Act. It would apply to shooting ranges that have historically been operated by outside entities on DCNR property. This legislation would prohibit DCNR from converting these properties to be used for other purposes and would require DCNR to seek approval from the local court of common pleas before they would be permitted to suspend shooting activities for more than six months or more than once during any ten-year period. I believe this strikes an appropriate balance between the interests of Pennsylvania's sportsmen and the responsibilities of DCNR.

If you are interested in joining me as a co-sponsor, please contact Alex Baldivieso at 260-6142 or via email abaldivi@pahousegop.com.