



**THE HUMANE SOCIETY**  
OF THE UNITED STATES

## Testimony on House Bill 251

Good Morning Chairman Staback, Chairman Rohrer and members of the House Game and Fisheries Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on House Bill 251.

My name is Andrew Page and I am representing the Humane Society of the United States - the nation's largest animal protection organization. We have nearly 10 million members and constituents nationwide, including more than half a million Pennsylvania residents. I manage the hunting campaign, which works to end the most egregious, unsporting, and cruel practices. Many mainstream hunting organizations also oppose these practices, which violate the hunter's fair chase principle.

On behalf of The Humane Society of the United States and its Pennsylvania membership, I urge the Committee to oppose HB 251.

In a unique alliance, the Pennsylvania Game Commission, the Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs<sup>i</sup>, and The Humane Society of the United States all agree that House Bill 251 essentially legalizes baiting. These groups are also joined by 71% of Pennsylvania hunters<sup>ii</sup> who oppose baiting. When groups that are often diametrically opposed are in agreement on this issue, you can be assured that there is something wrong with this bill.

Because the Pennsylvania Game Commission biologist and others have already addressed the issues of supplemental feeding and the wildlife management problems associated with baiting, I would like to encourage you to oppose this bill based on basic decency. I am sure that it comes as no surprise that animal protection organizations oppose baiting. Baiting is also a controversial issue within the hunting community, which considers baiting to be unsporting.

Long time hunter Jim Posewitz, founder of Orion: the Hunter's Institute, former biologist with Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, and author of *Beyond Fair Chase*, describes fair chase as "a balance between the hunter and the hunted." Posewitz goes on to say "The concept of fair chase is important to hunting. The general public will not tolerate hunting under any other circumstance."<sup>iii</sup>

A 2006 peer reviewed journal article in the *Wildlife Society Bulletin* concludes:

"A properly managed deer herd does not need supplementation, and a deer hunter does not need bait. We risk damage to the habitat and to deer and other wildlife populations with supplemental feeding... We also argue that if we continue in our current direction, we will not have the choice of how we hunt deer or possibly even whether we hunt deer. The nonhunting public will make those decisions for us."<sup>iv</sup>

Last month, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service released its preliminary data from 2006, which highlight again that the number of adult hunters in the United States is decreasing. Continuing a declining trend that began in the 1970s, the hunter population in the U.S. fell from 13 million

adult Americans in 2001 to 12.5 million in 2006, bringing the current percentage of hunters to only 4%.<sup>v</sup> I am sure that you are also aware that Pennsylvania's hunting license sales for 2006-07 were down from previous years.<sup>vi</sup>

As hunting participation continues a steady decline, hunters face increasing scrutiny from the public. Baiting is an activity that tips the scales in favor of the hunter, a practice not viewed favorably by the general public. When the public learns the unsporting practices of a few, it tends to attribute the behavior to all hunters.

Aside from the obvious ethical issues involved in shooting baited animals, the privatization of wildlife is another important issue. Deer, bear, and most other animals are creatures of habit. When they find a reliable, easy-to-access food supply, they often remain near it. Large scale supplemental feeding stations on private land may pull wildlife from public lands. Since the birth of the conservation movement, wildlife has belonged to the American people.

There is one simple method to resolve disagreement between the committee and the PGC concerning the perceived law enforcement issue: keep baiting illegal and phase out supplemental feeding.

Again, although The Humane Society of the United States, the PGC, and hunters may often disagree about bills before the Pennsylvania Legislature, this bill is opposed by all of us. The HSUS urges the Committee to continue Pennsylvanian's long-standing commitment to a position that baiting violates the hunter's principle of fair chase.

On behalf of The Humane Society of the United States and our membership, representing more than 550,000 Pennsylvanians, I thank you for providing me this opportunity to submit this testimony.

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<sup>i</sup> Crable, Ad, Outdoor Trails. July 5, 2007. A question of baiting. *Lancaster New Era*.  
<http://local.lancasteronline.com/4/205199>

<sup>ii</sup> Pennsylvania Game Commission, 2005-2006 Game Take Survey

<sup>iii</sup> Posewitz, Jim. 1994. *Beyond Fair Chase*, Falcon Press, MT. 57-59.

<sup>iv</sup> Brown, Robert D. and Susan Cooper. 2006. The nutritional, ecological, and ethical arguments against baiting and feeding white-tailed deer. *Wildlife Society Bulletin* 34(2) 519-524.

<sup>v</sup> U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Issued May 2007. 2006 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation - National Overview (Preliminary Findings).

<sup>vi</sup> Reilly, P.J. May 17, 2007. Hunting license sales in decline. *Intelligencer Journal* <http://local.lancasteronline.com/4/204312>>