



**THE HUMANE SOCIETY
OF THE UNITED STATES**

**Testimony in Opposition to Sunday Hunting
Presented to House Game and Fisheries Committee
June 9, 2011
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On behalf of The Humane Society of the United States, the nation's largest animal protection organization with over eleven million supporters, including more than **650,000** in Pennsylvania, I urge you to preserve Pennsylvania's longstanding prohibition on Sunday hunting.

According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, wildlife watchers make up 37% of Pennsylvania's population, while hunters represent only 11%. With hunting permitted six days per week for most of the year, outdoor enthusiasts deserve the freedom to have just one day per week to enjoy our natural resources in relative peace and quiet without fear for their safety.

Many outdoor enthusiasts reserve Sunday as their day to venture out into the woods. Hunters already enjoy recreational opportunities disproportionate with their numbers, and this legislation would create an even greater imbalance among outdoor users.

According to the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, wildlife watchers in Pennsylvania contribute more than \$1.4 billion dollars to the state's economy annually.ⁱ Tourist wildlife watchers exceed hunters in trip-related spending by more than 20 million dollars annually.ⁱⁱ Robbed of their only day to enjoy the outdoors safely during hunting season, wildlife watchers and other outdoor recreationists like hikers, birders, mountain bikers, campers, horseback riders, photographers, dog walkers, and others may opt to stay at home, robbing the state of economic revenue from these popular activities.

While proponents of Sunday hunting tout the economic benefits of Sunday hunting, not only does the report on which they base their claims fail to acknowledge the lost revenue from other Sunday recreation that would result, but the report has serious flaws that contribute to a gross overstatement of the economic benefits of Sunday hunting.

Most notably, the report uses an exaggerated number for increased hunter spending. This figure fails to account for fixed costs that are built into the calculation for daily hunter expenditure. The daily expenditure total used in this report includes—to name a few items—books and magazines, boat fuel, hunting dog costs, camper vans, guns, bows, binoculars, and camping gear. The reality is that the majority of people who would hunt on Sundays are already license holders who already own hunting-related equipment. Hunters would use the same gun, truck, etc. to hunt on Sunday that they would every other day of the week. By its own admission the report uses this daily expenditure figure, "*for lack of better data.*" The estimated daily expenditure is irresponsibly overstated and thus the purported economic benefits of Sunday hunting are a fallacy.

The deepest flaw of the report is that it fails to consider the obvious fact that many of the economic benefits of recreation simply transfer from one activity to another and do not represent new revenue. Surely those who cannot hunt on Sundays are not sitting at home all weekend. They engage in other activities that benefit our economy—they watch wildlife, go to the movies, horseback ride, eat at restaurants, go shopping, and attend sporting events. Much of the purported economic benefit of Sunday hunting is in reality a simple transfer between activities.

Opening Sunday hunting would represent a significant burden for landowners who overwhelmingly oppose Sunday hunting. When last surveyed, Sunday hunting was extremely unpopular with landowners. 82% either strongly opposed or opposed Sunday hunting. Furthermore, 16% would remove land from Pennsylvania Game Commission public access programs and 18% said they would completely close their land to hunting.

In many communities, Sundays are traditionally a time for families to rest at home, visit neighbors, or attend Sunday religious or spiritual services, uninterrupted by the sounds of gunshots. There is no reason to disrupt this custom to appease a minority recreational group.

Many Northeastern and Mid-Atlantic states join Pennsylvania in prohibiting or limiting Sunday hunting including: Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Virginia, and West Virginia.

The Sunday hunting prohibition is a commonsense way to let all Pennsylvanians enjoy our state's natural resources. Opening Sunday hunting would further the interests of a tiny minority of the population at the expense of other citizens. We urge you to oppose expansion attempts and to preserve the Pennsylvania tradition of granting outdoor enthusiasts the freedom to recreate on Sundays.

ⁱ National Survey of Hunting, Fishing, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation (2006). U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. <http://www.census.gov/prod/2008pubs/fhw06-pa.pdf>

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