



The Honorable Keith Gillespie
Chairman
House Game and Fisheries Committee

The Honorable William C. Kortz, II
Democratic Chairman
House Game and Fisheries Committee

Re: S. 147; Expansion of Sunday Hunting

Position: SUPPORT

September 10, 2019

Dear Chairman Gillespie, Chairman Kortz, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Brent Miller, and I am the Senior Director, Northeastern States for the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation (CSF). As an avid sportsman, and someone who dedicated their time in graduate school to studying the issue of Sunday hunting bans, I am writing today to express my strong support, as well as the support of CSF for Senate Bill 147, which would lessen the present restrictions on Sunday hunting in Pennsylvania.

As an organization, CSF supports the expansion of Sunday hunting in Pennsylvania for the following reasons:

- 1. Wildlife Management:** Sunday hunting will provide the Pennsylvania Game Commission with an additional adaptive management tool so they can more effectively manage wildlife resources within the Commonwealth.
- 2. Economic Considerations:** Several independent economic analyses conducted in recent years have all shown that the expansion of Sunday hunting will result in hundreds of millions of dollars in economic output and the creation of thousands of much needed jobs, particularly in rural areas that have been the hardest hit by the recent recession. One such study, commissioned by the Pennsylvania Legislative Budget and Finance Committee found that over \$800 million in yearly economic activity would result from Sunday hunting which would in turn support over 7,500 jobs.
- 3. Landowner Liberties:** Lifting the ban on Sunday hunting will fundamentally increase private property owners' freedom to choose how to manage their land and its natural resources.

- 4. Hunter Numbers & Conservation Funding:** Sunday hunting will result in increased opportunity for youth and working class citizens to engage in hunting, leading to higher satisfaction with this time-honored tradition, and ultimately more participation. Enhanced participation will result in positive economic benefits for the Pennsylvania Game Commission, which derives much of its funding from sportsmen and women through the American System of Conservation Funding.

The majority of the laws that prohibit various activities on Sundays, which were once in place in Pennsylvania, have been repealed through time, leaving Sunday hunting as one of the last remaining examples of the initial “blue laws”. Presently, the ban on Sunday hunting is infringing on the ability of private property owners to choose how to best manage their land, resources, time, and finances; is limiting the recruitment of additional hunters which negatively impacts conservation funding; and is depriving rural communities of much needed economic activity.

Unfortunately, the present restrictions on Sunday hunting not only impact Pennsylvania sportsmen and women, but they also limit the amount of non-resident hunters who would otherwise choose Pennsylvania as a destination hunting location. To illustrate the impact that Sunday hunting can have on increasing out-of-state license sales, we need only look across the western border and examine the sales history of Ohio. According to data from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, for 20 years prior to the passage of Sunday hunting, non-resident license sales only accounted for between 0.67% and 1.37% of total sales. However, since the passage of Sunday hunting, out of state license sales have been steadily increasing to where they now make up well over 10.8% of all sales. This means that roughly ten times more people are choosing Ohio as a destination hunting location than they were twenty years ago when the state’s Sunday hunting ban was still in place.

Throughout this debate, there has been much talk about the economic benefits of Sunday hunting to the general economy, but one area that has not been covered in detail is the potential for private property owners to lease their land specifically for hunting. Allowing farmers and other land owners to diversify their income sources by allowing an additional day of hunting on their land will help to provide a large capital influx to rural economies that are hardest hit by the recent recession. Historically, hunting related expenditures have proven to be relatively recession proof, and property owners in neighboring states have been afforded the opportunity to benefit from increased hunting related tourism, while Pennsylvania citizens have not.

Landowner freedoms go well beyond the financial benefits realized as a result of leasing one’s land. Farmers and other private property owners are also being limited in their ability to spend quality time hunting *their own land* with their families, children and friends.

As mentioned earlier, part of what I want to cover here is the potential to generate increased hunter numbers as a result of Sunday hunting. This ties in directly to the ability of Pennsylvania hunters to pass down their sportsmen’s heritage to the next generation, and to the ability of the Pennsylvania Game Commission to see increased funding levels for their conservation work that benefits all Pennsylvania citizens.

Prior to accepting my current position with CSF, I wrote my Master’s thesis (2011) on the topic of Sunday hunting. In my research, I analyzed the potential for changes in Sunday hunting policy

to generate increases in both hunter numbers, as well as funding for state wildlife management agencies throughout the northeast region. The research showed that lessening the present restrictions on Sunday hunting would likely result in a positive and measurable effect on hunting participation, and therefore conservation funding.

According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, for many years, Pennsylvania had well over 1.2 million hunters per year take advantage of the hunting opportunities within the Commonwealth. However, a closer examination of the 40 year trend in license sales shows that there has been a four decade (1980-2019) loss of 25% (318,600 licenses) of the Pennsylvania hunting community.

Through the American System of Conservation Funding, hunting license sales, as well as Pittman-Robertson apportionments, are key funding sources for the Pennsylvania Game Commission. Both of these revenue streams rely on hunter numbers and license sales that provide funding to cover operational expenses and to allow them to continue important conservation work that benefits not only game species, but also their habitat, which indirectly benefits the many other non-game species that live within the ecosystem. Therefore, successful efforts to increase the number of hunters within a state will not only serve to protect and strengthen our hunting heritage, but will also serve to provide additional funding to the very agency that manages the Commonwealth's wildlife resources.

My research examined license sales statistics surrounding the changes in Sunday hunting policies that have occurred in the 40 years prior to 2010 to determine the effect of future policy changes. When examining the effect of lessening Sunday restrictions, a trend ($t = 1.6871$; $p = 0.0587$) in license sales emerged. The analysis revealed a 2.6% improvement in the average rate of license sales growth between the three year periods just prior to and immediately following the first major change in Sunday hunting policy that occurs in a given state. Given these results, the effect of the policy change on license sales was then applied to the license sales trend of Pennsylvania to estimate the increase in hunters (over the business-as-usual decline) that would have occurred in the six years following 2011, assuming a policy change had been implemented that year.

The results showed that a change in Sunday hunting policy in 2011 would have produced a momentary halt in the decline of the hunting population. Although the declining trend in license sales would have once again resumed, the decline would occur at a slower rate than prior to the elimination of Sunday hunting bans. Additionally, the one-time temporary effect of the policy change would have created an improvement in license sales that would continue into the future. Therefore, a change in Sunday hunting policy in and of itself would likely not be sufficient to reverse the decline of hunters within the state. However, the results of this study clearly show that there are gains to be realized in both hunter numbers and funding for the Pennsylvania Game Commission.

In total, by the end of the six year projection, it was estimated that had a change in Sunday hunting policy occurred in 2011, **55,089 more hunters** would have been participating in the sport as compared to the projected decline of hunters without the passage of Sunday hunting. These additional hunters would lead to an additional **\$12.3 million in funding for the Pennsylvania Game Commission within a six year time span**. These figures represent a 6.11% increase in both hunters (as well as the funding stemming from hunters) in year six, simply as a result of allowing Sunday hunting within the commonwealth.

In the years following this research, the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation has worked with legislators and state agencies in states up and down the East coast to lessen or eliminate restrictions on Sunday hunting. These states include Connecticut, Delaware, Maryland, North Carolina, Virginia, and West Virginia – all of whom have made significant positive changes to their Sunday hunting laws, or (in the case of West Virginia) have eliminated all restrictions on hunting on Sundays. Letters from several state fish and wildlife agencies detailing their experiences following these policy changes are attached for your consideration.

In closing, for the many varied reasons outlined here the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation supports any and all efforts to reduce or eliminate the present restrictions on Sunday hunting. Specifically, CSF fundamentally supports the ability of the private property owners of Pennsylvania to decide for themselves how best to enjoy all that their land has to offer. Whether they choose to allow Sunday hunting on their land at all; whether they choose to lease their hunting rights on Sunday to diversify their income; whether they choose to enjoy hunting their land with close friends or family; or whether they choose to use Sundays to pass on the time-honored tradition of hunting to their children and grandchildren should be an individual choice - a choice which they are not presently able to exercise on Sunday.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this discussion.

Sincerely,



Brent Miller

Senior Director, Northeastern States
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation
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Enclosed: Letter from the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection detailing their experiences with Sunday hunting after archery hunting for deer on private lands was authorized.

Letter from the Delaware Division of Fish and Wildlife detailing their experiences following the passage of legislation to authorize deer hunting for five Sundays on private and public lands designated by government agencies.

Letter from the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries following the passage of legislation to authorize Sunday hunting on private lands throughout the state and on public waters for waterfowl.

CC: Representative Torren C. Ecker, Secretary
Representative Anita Astorino, Democratic Secretary
Representative Barry J. Jozwiak, Vice-Chair
Representative Gerald J. Muller, Democratic Vice-Chair
Representative Aaron Bernstine
Representative Bud Cook
Representative David M. Dellosa
Representative Garth D. Everett
Representative Mindy Fee
Representative Barbara Gleim
Representative Bridget M. Kosierowski
Representative David M. Maloney, Sr.
Representative Thomas L. Mehaffie, III
Representative Robert E. Merski
Representative Kyle J. Mullins
Representative Ed Neilson
Representative Clint Owlett
Representative Adam Ravenstahl
Representative Brian Sims
Representative Mike Tobash
Representative Justin M. Walsh
Representative Ryan Warner
Representative Parke Wentling



May 16, 2016

Brent Miller
Northeast States Director
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation
110 North Carolina Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20003

Dear Mr. Miller:

In 2015, the Connecticut General Assembly adopted Public Act 15-204, An Act Authorizing Bow and Arrow Hunting on Certain Private Property on Sundays. By adoption, the array of legal forms of hunting was expanded to include archery hunting for white tailed deer on private lands in zone determined by the commissioner to be overpopulated, the taking of propagated birds on licensed private shooting preserves with the consent of the town in which the preserve is located, and takings in conjunction with regulated trapping.

Although limited in scope, authorizing archery deer hunting on private lands represents a significant expansion of hunting privileges in Connecticut. Whitetailed deer hunting is the most intensely pursued form of hunting with similar numbers of sportsmen engaged in archery as firearms deer hunting.

In 2011 we conducted a survey of licensed archers in an area of the state with particularly high deer densities. In that survey, hunters identified hunting on Sunday as one of the changes they believed would increase opportunity the most. In fact, ninety four percent of archers indicated they would hunt on Sundays if given the chance.

Since adoption of PA 15-204, we have enjoyed one season of expanded deer hunting. We did not change season lengths, bag limits, or any other rules relative to the taking of deer. We have continued to collect hunter activity and harvest data and the results are much as we anticipated. Although Saturday remained the most popular weekend-day for hunting activity during the fall archery season (September through December), effort was slightly higher on Sunday during the January season. Overall, harvest on weekends (Saturday and Sunday combined) was higher than, but not substantially different from, previous years when hunters only had access on Saturday. In short, harvest didn't increase substantially. Rather it spread out over the two days available.

As of this date there have been no reported shooting related injuries nor loss of property associated with archery deer hunting on private lands on Sunday, nor have we received substantial negative reaction from the non-hunting public. Rather, of the few negative comments received, the majority have come from hunters expressing angst that the two of the thirteen deer management zones that were not opened to Sunday archery deer hunting and should have been. NOTE: Those zones were determined to be at or near the target deer densities for the management zone.

In summary, adoption of Public Act 15-204, An Act Authorizing Bow and Arrow Hunting on Certain Private Property on Sundays has been an unqualified success. It has bolstered our ability to manage deer populations and created added opportunities for Connecticut sportsmen.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Rick Jacobson', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Rick Jacobson,
Director – Wildlife Division