



**STATEMENT OF DAVID WEBER,
NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION STATE DIRECTOR,
ON BEHALF OF THE NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA
AT HEARING BEFORE THE HOUSE GAME & FISHERIES COMMITTEE,
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
ON PROPOSED LEGISLATION TO ALLOW SUNDAY HUNTING.**

SEPTEMBER 10, 2019

Honorable Members of the House Game and Fisheries Committee,

I would like to start off this afternoon with a reference to an article that ran in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette on February 18, 2001,

“The first of the blue laws in Pennsylvania was enacted in 1682, back when it was a colony of the British Empire. The general prohibition was against working or having fun on Sundays.”

Today, I sit here not only as a representative of the National Rifle Association of America and its proud members, but I speak as a native of Pennsylvania, a Pennsylvania hunter, and the father of young children who I am just starting to get into the woods. As I testify, I ask myself why, why in 2019 do we have legislation on the books that was created by British Rule? Why, roughly 337 years later, is this prohibition to Sunday hunting ‘blue law’ still in affect? Let me repeat that: roughly 337 years ago, the British told us we cannot hunt on Sunday. It is unfathomable that we still follow this law.

Gun ownership and participation in hunting and the shooting sports are among the strongest of American traditions. For decades, more than a million hunters in the Keystone State have taken to the field to enjoy the great outdoors. However, Pennsylvania has seen a decline in the number of hunters in recent years. This decline is in part due to a transition in a family life style; which is filled with commitments throughout the week. Between family, work, school and other obligations, Pennsylvania’s Sunday hunting restrictions only add to the challenge of getting out into the field.

There is currently legislation before the Pennsylvania General Assembly which is focused on giving discretion to the Pennsylvania Game Commission to expand Sunday hunting relative to season. This expansion would simply allow for three Sundays—let me repeat that—three Sundays, of hunting in the Commonwealth and give hunting families the flexibility they deserve and need. Senate Bill 147, introduced by Senator Dan Laughlin (R-49) and passing with bi-partisan support from the Senate in June, would undoubtedly invigorate essential hunter recruitment, retention and flexibility efforts -- key factors in preserving Pennsylvania’s hunting heritage for future generations to come.

Amazingly, the only two states that still ban hunting on Sunday’s are Maine and Pennsylvania. Other outdoor activities are allowed on Sunday, including those that take place on public and private property, such as fishing, hiking and golf. Restrictions on Sunday hunting effectively treat hunters as

second-class citizens. Such a view ignores the fact that hunting is part of Pennsylvania's heritage. And please remember, hunting season is short—it does not last all year long.

As a result, many hunters are unable to introduce their children or friends to hunting because Saturday is their only opportunity to hunt outside of the work week, and Saturday is often busy with family activities, organized sports and various other commitments. Further, numerous working-class adults work six days a week and only have Sunday off of work. Countless hunters stop hunting because of the lack of opportunity and time restrictions. The addition of an extra day in the field, especially on the weekend, increases the opportunity for those individuals to experience hunting.

The NRA has worked hard to end the ban on Sunday hunting in numerous other states throughout the mid-Atlantic. Though nay-sayers made claims that ending the bans would result in more conflict between hunters and private landowners, this has not been the case. In fact, in the Commonwealth of Virginia, where the ban on Sunday hunting ended in 2014, there are fewer calls in to the Fish & Game agency on Sundays than there are on Saturdays. Further, there have been little to no efforts to reinstate the ban in any of the states' where the ban has been lifted. Hunting has taken place on Sundays with little to no problems. This is mostly due to well-trained, safe hunters and the strict hunter safety course that is required before purchasing a hunting license.

Currently, Pennsylvania allows some private landowner' hunting and some varmint hunting on Sundays; yet for no logical reason, deer hunting, for example, is prohibited on Sundays. The same hunters that are prohibited from hunting on a Sunday have contributed billions of dollars to wildlife conservation programs through the purchase of firearms, ammunition and archery equipment. This Pennsylvania restriction not only impedes hunter recruitment and retention, but also rejects the economic benefits hunters provide through the purchase of fuel, food, lodging and dozens of incidentals that go along with a day's hunt.

Furthermore, current law gives a select group of private landowners, whose property is enrolled as a noncommercial regulated hunting ground, the privilege to hunt on Sundays. This law amounts to tens of thousands of acres being hunted on Sundays by landowners who can afford to own and enroll their 100+ acre plots as a noncommercial regulated hunting ground. This exemption, which became law more than a decade ago, only allows those who own large tracts of land the pleasure of hunting on Sundays; while continuing to deny the majority of Pennsylvania hunters the same freedom.

Affording citizens, the flexibility and opportunity to hunt on Sundays does not mandate anyone to participate. This legislation simply would expand Sunday hunting opportunities and give the wildlife experts at the Pennsylvania Game Commission the authority to regulate the seasons and times as they do for the other six days of the week.

Pennsylvania has a long and storied history of outdoorsmen, dating back to William Penn himself. To protect and maintain the Keystone State's proud hunting heritage, we must strive to provide increased opportunities and encourage the next generation of hunters. We feel SB 147 is excellent compromise to allow Pennsylvanians the right they deserve.

Today, I would like to leave you with this, yes, our primary mission at the National Rifle Association is protecting and defending the 2nd Amendment. And while the core of the 2nd Amendment has nothing to do with hunting, however, hunting has everything to do with the 2nd Amendment. The National Rifle Association, clearly states one of our purposes is: "to promote hunter safety, and to promote and defend hunting as a shooting sport and as a viable and

necessary method of fostering the propagation, growth, conservation and wise use of our renewable wildlife resources.” As we as an organization will never stop defending our freedoms, I hope you, as a legislative body, will not waver in protecting our freedoms.

On behalf of the National Rifle Association of America, I thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important matter and would ask for your support in this effort.