



May 2, 2019

The Honorable Lorena Gonzalez, Chair
 Assembly Appropriations Committee
 State Capitol, Room 2114
 Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Assembly Bill 18 (As Amended April 24, 2019) - OPPOSE

Dear Assembly Member Gonzalez,

The undersigned wildlife conservation organizations must strongly oppose AB 18 (as amended April 24, 2019) – legislation which would impose an additional excise tax on the retailer of \$25 per new handgun or semiautomatic rifle or shotgun sold to fund the California Violence Intervention and Prevention Grant Program (CalVIP).

All of California’s law-abiding public benefit from efforts to implement programs which address gun violence prevention and intervention, and all should equally help to fund their implementation. Yet, under AB 18, only law-abiding citizens who legally purchase their firearms from retailers would be called upon to fund this additional excise tax. As such, AB 18 would inappropriately place the entire obligation of funding these violence prevention and intervention programs on the backs of law-abiding hunters and shooters who have no more to do with firearm violence than any other law-abiding Californian.

In addition to the unjust collection of CalVIP funding from only a small segment of our public, the uncertainty of the cost of AB 18 – estimated at “hundreds of thousands of dollars” to administer and

collect the tax, with an additional “hundreds of thousands of dollars” for the state to administer CalVIP grants – presents an unacceptable financial risk to the state.

But the cost to the state of developing and implementing the CalVIP program is not the only price California would pay. AB 18 would also have a substantial impact upon our state’s wildlife and the enjoyment they provide all our public. Law-abiding hunters and shooters who legally purchase sporting arms and munitions already pay an 11% federal excise tax on the purchase of these goods via the federal Pittman-Robertson Act. This tax contributes tens of millions of dollars annually to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife – revenue which funds a large portion of our state’s wildlife management, conservation and research efforts. Placing another tax on top of the excise tax sporting arms are already subject to will only further drive up the cost of these goods, reduce their sales and, in turn, reduce the critical annual revenues available for California’s wildlife conservation and management efforts.

All of California’s citizens support and benefit from efforts intended to reduce crime and take criminals off our streets. Yet, AB 18 would wrongly place the entire burden of funding CalVIP on a very small segment of our law-abiding public. Further, AB 18 would have substantial unintended impacts on our state’s wildlife conservation efforts, while subjecting California to unknown cost risk.

For all the above reasons, our organizations have no choice but to strongly oppose your AB 18.

Sincerely,

Kyle Weaver, President and CEO
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation

Mark Hennelly, V.P. of Government Affairs
California Waterfowl Association

Lori Jacobs, President
California Houndsmen for Conservation

Gary F. Brennan, President
San Diego County Wildlife Federation

Fred Harpster, President
The Black Brant Group

Dennis Slater, President
Tulare Basin Wetlands Association

Aoibheann Cline, Western States Coordinator
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation

Donn Walgamuth, President
California Deer Association

Don Kirby, President
Cal-Ore Wetland and Waterfowl Council

Chriss Bowles, President
California Bowmen Hunters/State Archery Association

Darryl Williams, President
California Chapter – Wild Sheep Foundation

Rick Travis, Executive Director
California Rifle and Pistol Association

Cathie Nelson, President
San Francisco Bay Area Chapter – Safari Club International

Dawnita Harwood, President
California State Chapter – National Wild Turkey Federation

cc: The Honorable Marc Levine
Members, Assembly Appropriations Committee