



To: Honorable Members of the Natural Resources Committee
State Capitol
1445 K St.
Lincoln, NE 68508

Re: LB 468 – Game and Parks Commission Wildlife Damage Compensation

Position: Oppose

Date: February 11, 2021

Honorable Members of the Natural Resources Committee:

On behalf of the Congressional Sportsmen’s Foundation (CSF), I ask that you oppose Legislative Bill 468 (LB 468), a bill that would require the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission (NGPC) to compensate landowners for property damage caused by game animals and game birds. We request that this letter be included as part of the public hearing record.

Since 1989, CSF has maintained a singleness of purpose that has guided the organization to become the most respected and trusted sportsmen's organization in the political arena. CSF's mission is to work with Congress, governors, and state legislatures to protect and advance hunting, angling, recreational shooting, and trapping. The unique and collective force of the Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus, the Governors Sportsmen's Caucus, and the National Assembly of Sportsmen's Caucuses, working closely with CSF, and with the support of major hunting, recreational fishing and shooting, and trapping organizations, serves as an unprecedented network of pro-sportsmen elected officials that advance the interests of America's hunters and anglers.

The issue of property damage caused by wildlife is not new to Nebraska. In fact, NGPC staff have estimated that wildlife cause millions of dollars’ worth of property damage each year. However, many of these damages are already covered by crop and property insurance and requiring the NGPC to provide additional compensation is not a solution for depredation. Conversely, requiring the NGPC to divert time and resources to assessing and monetizing property damage claims is a distraction from the agency’s other duties of managing Nebraska’s fish and wildlife resources for the benefit of all Nebraskans.

As outlined by the Public Trust Doctrine and stated by NGPC on their website, “the wildlife resource is held in trust for the citizens of Nebraska for all of its citizens to utilize for recreation

and education. This wildlife resource does not belong to the Game and Parks Commission, but to all Nebraskans.” As the managers of these public trust resources, NGPC currently offers several opportunities for landowners to work with the agency to address issues related to crop depredation and wildlife-caused damages. Among the tools employed by NGPC to mitigate damage caused by game species are damage control permits and access to an antlerless deer hunter database which connects landowners with hunters willing to assist with population control efforts through legal, regulated hunting activities.

CSF supports the use of hunting as the preferred tool to manage wildlife populations. As such, we would encourage all landowners experiencing damage caused by game species to explore these opportunities, particularly those that allow responsible hunters seeking opportunities to assist in population management efforts in exchange for access to areas to hunt. Using these programs that are already in place will allow landowners to address the cause of their problems, rather than relying on the agency for compensation. This will also allow NGPC to focus on other issues related to the management of Nebraska’s public trust resources for the benefit of all Nebraskans.

In conclusion, CSF asks the Committee to oppose LB 468. Given the opportunities that are already provided by NGPC coupled with insurance payments that many landowners already receive when damage is experienced, we believe that the provisions of LB 468 would result in an unnecessary burden on NGPC without effectively solving problems associated with damage caused by game animals. If you have questions or would like any additional information, please feel free to contact me using the information below.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kent Keene", written in a cursive style.

Kent Keene

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