



To: Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee
State House
107 North Main Street
Room 103
Concord, NH 03301

Re: SB 588 – An Act Relative to Wanton Waste of an Animal and Prohibiting Wildlife Killing Contests.

Position: Oppose

Date: February 13, 2020

Honorable Members of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee:

My name is Joseph Mullin and I am the New England States Coordinator for the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation (CSF). I respectfully urge you to oppose Senate Bill 588 (SB 588) – legislation that would prohibit hunting contests and therefore reduce opportunities for New Hampshire's sportsmen and women. Hunting tournaments are a well-regulated practice that requires participants to abide by the regular hunting laws. They offer the opportunity for sportsmen and women to form new relationships and bonds over a sense of alliance, all while working to combat the declining trend in hunting participation in New Hampshire.

Since 1989, CSF has dedicated itself to the mission of working 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 conservation interests of America's hunters and anglers.

In 2019 alone, New Hampshire's sportsmen and women generated over \$19 million dollars for conservation through the American System of Conservation Funding – a “*user-pays, public-benefits*” approach, to support the conservation efforts of the New Hampshire Fish and Game (NHFG) Department. A portion of this population includes sportsmen and women pursuing coyotes and other furbearing animals, and in many cases, they are participants in hunting tournaments. Contrary to the misinformed narrative that often circles the topic of hunting contests, parties to these tournaments are not exempted from following the same honorable wildlife laws and regulations as other sporting pursuits – especially in regards methods of take, hunting hours, the requirement for a New Hampshire hunting license, and any rules pertaining to the tagging/use of the carcass or pelt after the harvest.

For the past 30 years, participation in hunting has been on a declining trend in New Hampshire. In 1988, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service reported a total of 97,005 certified paid license holders¹; by 2019, that number had decreased to 57,632². Because the NHFG Department relies heavily on funding generated by the sale of hunting licenses, the decline of hunters in New Hampshire poses a threat to the future ability of the Department to effectively carry out its mission. At a time when participation in hunting has been on a declining trend in the Granite State (and on a national level), we encourage the legislature to leave these decision-making abilities to the NHFG Department – the body set with the right tools and expertise to make informed choices with how to proceed on hunting and fishing-related matters.

Numerous accounts of conflicts between coyotes, humans, and their pets have been well-documented in the media, and it stands to reason that the frequency of these occurrences is likely to increase if hunting opportunities are limited. Just last month, a New Hampshire man was forced to choke a coyote to death with his bare hands after it attacked his child³. Incidents such as this can be found in the news throughout New England. Eliminating a potential management tool to deal with localized issues of overabundance and human-wildlife conflict is not in the best interest of the Department, or public safety.

Hunting tournaments offer a heightened level of comradery and affability amongst the participants. In general, hunting often spawns a friendly, competitive environment between family and friends; however, tournaments offer the ability to challenge each other in a regulated environment, spurring a determination that often leads to lifetime memories and newly built relationships. During these events, competitors become friends, and friends become family. New methods and strategies are passed from one hunter to another, increasing the collective effectiveness and unity of the hunting community. The State should be exploring ways to expand hunting opportunities throughout New Hampshire, not limiting them – and the consideration of such methods should be left to the NHFG Department.

Respectfully, I urge the members of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee to oppose SB 588. I appreciate your time and consideration on this issue. Should you require any additional information on this, or any other sportsmen-related topic, please feel free to contact me at any time.

Sincerely,



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¹ *National Hunting License Report*. US Fish and Wildlife Service, 2015. Available online at: <https://wsfrprograms.fws.gov/Subpages/LicenseInfo/HuntingLicCertHistory.pdf>.

² *National Hunting License Data*. US Fish and Wildlife Service, 2018. Available online at: <https://wsfrprograms.fws.gov/Subpages/LicenseInfo/Nat1%20Hunting%20License%20Report%202019.pdf>.

³ *NH Father Kills Coyote with Bare Hands After Attacks in 2 Towns*. CBS Boston. Accessed on February 13, 2020. Available online at: <https://boston.cbslocal.com/2020/01/20/coyote-killed-new-hampshire-father-kensington-exeter-attacks-rabies/>.