



To: The Honorable David L. Deen
Chairman, House Committee on Fish, Wildlife, and Water Resources
115 State Street, Room 47
Montpelier, VT 05633-5301

Re: Firearm Suppressors

Position: SUPPORT

Date: February 18, 2015

Chairman Deen:

My name is Brent Miller, and I am the Northeastern States Director for the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation (CSF). Although I now live and work in Washington, DC, I grew up in the northeast hunting deer and turkey. As such, I have a vested personal and professional interest in ensuring that future generations have the ability to enjoy the way of life that was afforded to me in my 30 years as a sportsman in the northeast. To that end, I am here today, to testify in support of allowing firearm suppressors to be used in Vermont.

Since 1989 the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation 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 (CSC), the Governors Sportsmen's Caucus (GSC) and the National Assembly of Sportsmen's Caucuses (NASC), working closely with CSF, and with the support of major hunting, recreational fishing & shooting, and trapping organizations, serves as an unprecedented network of pro-sportsmen elected officials that advance the interests of America's hunters and anglers.

Allowing suppressors to be used for firearms has numerous positive benefits including hearing protection, and reduced recoil and muzzle rise resulting in increased shooter confidence, thereby allowing for more consistent and accurate shots. Additionally, the use of suppressors can result in improved relations with the general public and local property owners. Reducing conflicts in this way

will help ensure that shooting ranges remain open as population growth and development occurs. Finally, the positive attributes of suppressors assist in the recruitment of new participants to the sport, which has long-lasting effects on conservation funding and ensures the continuation of our sportsmen's heritage for generations to come.

Suppressor Background

Suppressors, also known as "silencers," are the hearing protection of the 21st century sportsman. Despite common myths and misconceptions, suppressors do not silence host firearms. Suppressors are engineered to reduce the sound signature of a gunshot, minimize felt recoil, increase accuracy, and are quickly becoming a favored accessory of shooters nationwide. Suppressors work by trapping the expanding gasses at the muzzle of a firearm, allowing them to slowly cool, in a similar fashion to car mufflers. By decreasing the overall sound signature, suppressors help to preserve the hearing of recreational shooters, hunters, and hunting dogs around the world.

Even the most effective suppressors on the smallest calibers, like .22 LR, reduce the peak sound level of a gunshot to around 110-120 decibel (dB). To put that in perspective, according to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), that is as loud as a jackhammer (110 dB) or an ambulance siren (120 dB).

When considering larger caliber firearms, which average between 155-185 dB unsuppressed, the best suppressors on the market reduce the peak sound level to around 130-150 dB. While this is a tremendous reduction in noise level, it is still as loud as a jet engine at takeoff (140 dB). Although there is variation, well-engineered suppressors generally reduce noise levels by about 20-35 dB, roughly the same amount as earplugs or earmuffs.

Addressing Potential Concerns

Opponents of suppressor use for hunting often posit that their legalization will result in an increase in poaching incidents. This position is largely based on the misconception that suppressors completely silence firearms. States that have recently legalized their use have seen no increase in poaching. In part, this is due to the fact that suppressors are highly regulated devices.

Suppressors are regulated under the National Firearms Act (NFA) of 1934, the same act which regulates machine guns and short barreled rifles. These items, which fall under the purview of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), carry severe penalties for criminal use. In order to purchase a suppressor, an individual must find a licensed dealer, send the appropriate paperwork to the ATF along with a one-time \$200 tax per suppressor, undergo an extensive FBI background check, and undergo a NICS check at the point of purchase. As of January, 2015, the average length of this process is between 4 and 9 months.

Closing

While there remains a large amount of misinformation concerning suppressors, realistically they are a useful tool with multiple positive applications. As such, the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation supports the expansion of suppressor use due to the numerous positive benefits of the technology, including: hearing protection, reduced recoil and muzzle rise resulting in increased shooter confidence, allowing for more consistent and accurate shots, improved relations with the general public, and the potential recruitment and retention of new hunters and shooting sports participants due to the favorable attributes of suppressors.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this discussion. Should you require any additional information on this matter, please feel free to contact me at any time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brent Miller". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "B".

Brent Miller

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CC: The Honorable Jim McCullough, *Vice Chair*
The Honorable Steve Beyor, *Ranking Member*
The Honorable Bob Krebs
The Honorable Paul Lefebvre, *Clerk*
The Honorable Amy Sheldon
The Honorable Thomas Terenzini
The Honorable Kate Webb
The Honorable Janssen Willhoit