



March 23, 2015

Chairman Ryan Guillen & Honorable Members of the House Committee on Culture, Recreation & Tourism
Texas House of Representatives
PO Box 2910
Austin, TX 78768-2910

RE: HJR 61 – A Constitutional Amendment Relating to the Right to Hunt, Fish, and Harvest Wildlife

Position: SUPPORT

Dear Members of the House Committee on Culture, Recreation and Tourism:

I am writing today to express our organization's support of House Joint Resolution 61 (HJR 61), the proposed constitutional amendment that guarantees the rights of Texans to hunt, fish and harvest wildlife by traditional methods. Understandably, many people may not see the need for a constitutional amendment to protect hunting and fishing, especially for a state like Texas which has such a strong sporting tradition. However, many states with the same strong sporting traditions have faced costly court battles in a number of cases challenging their authority and their methods to manage their fish and wildlife resources. Furthermore, anti-hunting organizations often lead the public to believe that hunting, fishing and the ethical harvest of our wildlife resources through traditional means are only a privilege subject to social pressures and prevailing public sentiments rather than an inherent right.

The Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation (CSF) recognizes the significant, positive economic impact of sportsmen and women who directly support conservation through responsible harvest and funding for management of fish and wildlife resources. Through the American System of Conservation Funding (ASCF) – a "user-pays, public benefits" model - state-based conservation is primarily paid for by hunters, recreational shooters and anglers through their purchases of taxable gear and hunting and fishing licenses. In 2013 alone Texas sportsmen and women, through the ASCF, generated \$136,024,603 for fish and wildlife conservation and public access in the state.

To understand just how important hunting and fishing are to Texas, one need only look at the most recent numbers based on the 2011 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife Associated Recreation conducted by the US Fish & Wildlife Service. Texas ranks second in the nation with over 2.7 million hunters and anglers who spend \$4.1 billion each year pursuing their outdoor passions.

Supporting over 65,000 jobs and generating \$411 million in state and local taxes, hunting and fishing are not only important culturally to the people of Texas, but also provide a significant and reliable economic engine for the state.

Although 17 states have only recently added the right to hunt and fish to their state's respective constitutions, the precedent for constitutional protection of our outdoor heritage was first set back in 1777, when Vermont recognized the need to guarantee the right for their citizens in the very beginning of their statehood. If successful, Texas would join 18 other states in giving their citizens the same constitutional protection.

We urge the Committee to accept HJR 61 and allow the people of Texas the opportunity to protect the future of fishing, hunting and wildlife conservation for current and future generations of Texans.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Chris Horton".

Chris Horton
Midwestern States Director
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation