



**To: Missouri House Conservation and Natural Resources Committee**

**Re: HJR 107: Conservation Commission Membership Composition**

**Position: Oppose**

**Date: January 24, 2021**

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Honorable Members of the Conservation and Natural Resources Committee:

On behalf of the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation (CSF), I write to express our opposition to House Joint Resolution 107 (HJR 107), a proposed constitutional amendment to the current system by which members of the Missouri Conservation Commission are appointed. Specifically, HJR 107 proposes to amend the constitution and require that members of the Commission be elected through statewide elections, rather than appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Senate, bodies that are already elected by the public.

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.

State wildlife and conservation commissions, including the Missouri Conservation Commission, were established with the dedicated purpose of protecting and conserving wildlife through regulations and sustainable hunting. To accomplish this purpose, it is imperative that the members of these commissions understand the significant contributions of hunters and anglers to the conservation of Missouri's wildlife resources and, as a result, are dedicated to protecting and advancing opportunities for sportsmen and women to participate in our outdoor heritage.

Furthermore, the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation relies on democratic rule of law as it relates to hunting and fishing regulations, and this democracy is best achieved through the public comment period required for all regulatory changes brought before the Commission, rather than through decisions related to the makeup of the Commission itself. Given the history

of conservation successes achieved by the Commission under its current appointment structure and the public engagement process, best observed recently through the successful implementation of elk and black bear hunting seasons in the state, the changes proposed by HJR 107 are unnecessary.

Amending the system by which Commission members are selected, which is consistent with the appointment structure successfully utilized in Missouri and many neighboring states, could result in significant negative consequences for Missouri's wildlife and the sportsmen and women who most directly support and utilize them. Specifically, the election system proposed by HJR 107 opens the door for individuals who are not supportive of hunting or angling to be elected to the Commission and, as a result, negatively impact the management of Missouri's public trust wildlife resources which, in many cases, rely on legal, regulated hunting as a management tool. With this in mind, we believe that the changes proposed by HJR 107 are potentially dangerous for the future of both Missouri's wildlife resources and the opportunities these resources afford to the state's sportsmen and women.

In conclusion, CSF asks the Committee to oppose HJR 107, instead maintaining the current system for appointing members to the Missouri Conservation Commission. As the entity charged with making decisions regarding the management of the Show-Me State's public trust fish and wildlife resources, it is critical that the Commission be comprised of members who are qualified to make such decisions. Recognizing the plethora of successful conservation efforts completed by the Missouri Department of Conservation under the leadership of the Missouri Conservation Commission, it is clear that amending the structure by which Commissioners are selected is unnecessary and could lead to several negative consequences for Missouri's fish and wildlife resources such as those outlined above. 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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