



February 20, 2024

Representative Keisling
Chairman, House State Government Committee
722 Cordell Hull Building
425 5th Avenue North
Nashville, TN 37243

Re: Senate Bill 1751 / House Bill 2141; Increase in Poaching Penalties and Fines

Position: Support

Dear Chairman Keisling and Members of the House State Government Committee,

On behalf of the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation, we write to respectfully express our support for Senate Bill 1751/House Bill 2141 which would increase penalties and fines for poaching violations.

Founded in 1989, the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation (CSF) is the informed authority across outdoor issues and serves as the primary conduit for influencing public policy. Working with the Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus (CSC), the Governors Sportsmen's Caucus (GSC), and the National Assembly of Sportsmen's Caucuses (NASC), CSF gives a voice to hunters, anglers, recreational shooters, and trappers on Capitol Hill and throughout state capitols advocating on vital outdoor issues that are the backbone of our nation's conservation legacy.

Poaching is one of the greatest threats to the social acceptance of hunting and professional wildlife management. Poaching runs afoul of one of the pillars of the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation, that every person has the freedom to hunt and fish, subject to state and federal laws and regulations. Further, the actions of poachers are often at the center of arguments utilized by anti-hunting groups that attempt to conflate poaching with legal, regulated hunting.

Senate Bill 1751/House Bill 2141 would institute harsher punishments for poachers by increasing the penalty from a Class C to a Class B misdemeanor and increase fines up to \$500.00 for each offense, which is relatively modest compared to many states, especially states that have recently updated their poaching penalties. Currently, under Tennessee Code Section 70-6-102, the unauthorized take of fish and wildlife is punishable by fines no less than \$25.00 nor more than \$50.00 for each offense.

Your Inside Connection to Outdoor Legislation

Further, a Tennessee resident combination hunting and fishing license costs \$33.00, and currently under Tennessee Code Section 70-2-101 subsection (e), an individual who takes or attempts to take game or fish and does not possess the requisite licensing can only be punished by a fine of not less than \$10.00 nor more than \$25.00. Therefore, under current statute, an individual could pursue game or fish illegally and encounter a fine that is less than the cost of the requisite license needed to recreate lawfully. Increasing these fines would help disincentivize poaching more than the current fine structure.

To help further protect Tennessee's wildlife and fisheries, as well as opportunities for sportsmen and women who hunt and fish legally, we respectfully encourage you to support Senate Bill 1751/House Bill 2141.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Conner Barker". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'C'.

Conner Barker
Southeastern States Coordinator
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation
cbarker@congressionalsportsmen.org