



To: Senate Environment and Agriculture Committee
82 Smith Street
Room 318
Providence, RI 02903

Re: Senate Bill 2154 – An Act Relating to Fish and Wildlife – Birds
(Allows the Taking of Wild Turkeys by Using a Crossbow in
Compliance with Rules and Regulations Promulgated by
DEM.)

Position: Support

Date: March 12, 2024

Honorable Members of the Senate Environment and Agriculture Committee,

My name is Fred Bird, and I am the Northeastern States Manager for the Congressional Sportsmen’s Foundation (CSF). I write to you today in support of Senate Bill 2154 (SB 2154) An Act Relating to Fish and Wildlife – Birds (Allows the Taking of Wild Turkeys by Using a Crossbow in Compliance With Rules and Regulations Promulgated by DEM). Doing so will expand sporting opportunities for Rhode Island’s sportsmen and women who are not able to physically use traditional vertical archery equipment, disabled veterans, seniors, youth, and disabled residents. Additionally, the proposed change would alleviate confusion and align Rhode Island’s archery deer season where crossbows are permitted and the fall wild turkey season. In many states the use of crossbows during the spring turkey season is permitted as an option along with shotgun and traditional archery equipment. I respectfully urge the members of this Committee to support the passage of this legislation.

Founded in 1989, 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.

For more than 85 years, sportsmen and women have been the primary funders of state-level conservation efforts in Rhode Island and are thus an important constituency that provide benefits

for all Rhode Island residents. Enacted in 1937, the Pittman-Robertson Act redirected previously existing manufacturer-level excise taxes on firearms and ammunition to a dedicated fund to be used specifically for wildlife conservation purposes. Once collected, the taxes are deposited into the Wildlife Restoration Account, which is administered by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), who then apportions funds to all state fish and wildlife agencies for conservation purposes. Under the Pittman-Robertson Act and per the Firearms and Ammunition Excise Tax, firearms, ammunition, and archery equipment are subjected to a 10-11% excise tax. Ultimately, it was the sporting industry who decided to avail themselves to this excise tax – a choice prompted in sole consideration of the interest and betterment of the nation’s fish and wildlife, and the habitats that they rely on.

Over the last decade, many states have expanded opportunities for archery hunters wishing to use crossbows. Incorporating crossbow hunting opportunities into game management may increase hunter recruitment and retention, and crossbows can be valuable tool for controlling game populations, particularly in suburban and urban areas. In recent years, New Hampshire authorized the use of crossbows during the deer archery season and fall turkey season in specific wildlife management units to bring crossbow use in line with the deer season and eliminating confusion while adding additional access for sportsmen and women. Maine added crossbows to the definition of “archery equipment” and turkey hunters are permitted to utilize crossbows during the spring and fall turkey seasons in Maine.

Given the increased access opportunities to Rhode Island’s sportsmen and women of all physical capabilities, the increase opportunity for Recruitment, Retention, and Reactivation (R3), and eliminating confusion bringing fall deer and turkey seasons in line, I respectfully request that the members of this Committee support the passage of Senate Bill 2154. I appreciate the opportunity to provide these comments and welcome any questions that you may have. Should you require additional information on this, or other sportsmen-related topics, please feel free to contact me at any time.

Sincerely,



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