



February 11, 2025

Representative Rusty Grills
Chairman, House Agriculture and Natural Resources Subcommittee
644 Cordell Hull Building
425 Rep John Lewis Way N
Nashville, TN 37243

Re: House Bill 24; Increase Poaching Penalties and Fines

Position: Support

Dear Chairman Grills and Members of the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Subcommittee,

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we write to respectfully express our support of House Bill 24 which would increase penalties and fines for poaching violations.

Poaching threatens the social acceptance of hunting and professional wildlife management. Regardless of the justification behind the action, 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 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.

House Bill 24 would institute further punishments for poachers by increasing the penalty from a Class C to a Class B misdemeanor and increasing fines to not exceed \$500 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, unless otherwise specified. Further, a Tennessee resident combination hunting and fishing license currently costs \$33.00, and 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.

Small fines coupled with minor legal penalties incentivize poachers with the knowledge of only minor repercussions, even if they were to be caught. The increases in penalties and fines would

serve to combat poaching efforts and impose harsher punishments on those found to have engaged in poaching.

To help protect science-based wildlife management and the thousands of ethical hunters in Tennessee, we respectfully encourage you to support House Bill 24.

Sincerely,

Boone and Crockett Club
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation
Safari Club International
Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation
Tennessee Wildlife Federation