



State of Connecticut

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STATE CAPITOL

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WEDNESDAY, MARCH 7, 2012

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

PUBLIC HEARING TESTIMONY
IN SUPPORT OF
HOUSE BILL 5263,

“AN ACT INCREASING THE PENALTY FOR POACHING.”

Good Morning Chairman Meyer, Chairman Roy, Ranking Member Roraback, Ranking Member Chapin, and the Honorable Members of the Environment Committee, I am State Representative Mike Alberts of Woodstock. I am truly appreciative that you have chosen to raise this concept for Public Hearing.

Under current law, those hunters who trespass and hunt on property where hunting is prohibited are subject to fines that have not been updated for nearly half a century. My hope is that stricter fines for illegal poaching will increase awareness amongst hunters who may mistakenly trespass on protected land, and act as a deterrent to those who would knowingly trespass and poach.

There are legitimate reasons that some land is not legally available for hunting. In a specific incident from my district, a hunter shot at deer from his property. The direction in which he was discharging his weapon happened to back up to land owned by the local Audubon Society where hunting was prohibited. Additionally, there were hiking trails that crossed directly in front of this hunter's line of fire. This particular hunter did happen to kill three deer, all of which were on Audubon land when they were shot. The hunter was charged with illegally hunting deer, but was fined only a token fee of \$100; a slap on the wrist. By increasing fines for this sort of careless action this legislation would help prevent similar situations in the future and ensure the safety of those who enjoy the land for recreational uses.

H.B. 5263 is good legislation that seeks to protect property rights and also the image of sportsmen in this state. Though the vast majority of hunters are responsible and law abiding, the current fine levels provide little incentive for those who are not to obey “no hunting” or “no trespassing” signs. Higher fines will increase awareness and deter would-be poachers from acting on their impulses. I urge the committee to vote this worthwhile legislation out of Committee.