



THE HUMANE SOCIETY
OF THE UNITED STATES

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February 25, 2013

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Environment Committee
Room 3200, Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106
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Re: Please **OPPOSE SB 915, Sunday hunting**

Dear Co-Chair Meyer, Co-Chair Gentile, and Honorable Members of the Environment Committee,

On behalf of the Connecticut supporters of The Humane Society of the United States, I submit this letter to **OPPOSE SB 915**, and any other attempts to expand hunting on Sundays.

The introduction of SB 915 is the first step to allow all forms of hunting on Sundays in Connecticut.

Bill proponents say that this bill pertains to private land only. However, the bill's language is vague. Hunters are merely required to carry written permission to hunt on private property, but nowhere does the language stipulate that Sunday hunting is restricted to private property. This is a crucial distinction - and one that has the potential to open up all Connecticut land for Sunday hunting without any transparency or allowance for public input.

Other states, such as New Jersey and Maryland, have opened limited forms of Sunday hunting in one legislative session and then immediately proposed a complete repeal of the Sunday hunting prohibition in the following legislative session.

Taking the first step down this slippery slope would further the interests of a tiny fraction of the population (~1%) at the expense of other citizens who have their own claim to enjoying nature.

Sunday hunting doesn't make economic sense.

Wildlife watching and other outdoor recreation is an important part of Connecticut's economy. According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service,

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wildlife watchers in Connecticut outspend hunters by 7.4 to 1, contributing about \$510 million to the economy annually.

Numbers of hunters are low and declining, while wildlife watchers are growing rapidly.

Wildlife watching is defined as observing, feeding, or photographing wildlife. According to the most recent data from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, wildlife watchers in Connecticut outnumber hunters in Connecticut by a margin of 29 to 1. (Note: This is the highest such state ratio in the United States, representing 1,102,000 wildlife watchers to only 38,000 hunters.)

Further, the data shows the following 10-year trends: a 42% increase in the number of wildlife watchers (from 774,000 to 1,102,000), and a 39% decrease in the number of hunters (from 62,000 to 38,000).

Hunters already enjoy recreational opportunities disproportionate with their numbers — hunting is already permitted 6 days a week for most of the year. It is only fair that given their overwhelming majority of the state's population, non-hunters should have one day per week to enjoy Connecticut's rich natural resources in safety and peace.

Sunday hunting will not reduce Lyme disease risk.

The Black-legged tick has well over 100 hosts, including all mammals, many popular songbirds, and even lizards. Studies have shown that the removal of one host isn't enough to suppress the Lyme-disease causing tick (Ostfeld, 2011, Jordan et al, 2007). In addition, the ticks are highly adaptable, and will switch to other hosts when there's a shortage of their preferred host, or congregate in higher densities on the remaining deer. In addition, research indicates that hunting may put the public more at risk by creating disease "hot spots" (S. Perkins et al, 2006, Ginsberg and Zhioua, 1999; Ostfeld, 2011). That is, mature ticks that normally latch onto large hosts (i.e. deer) are more likely to end up on people and dogs after deer numbers have been reduced. There's a good reason why the CDC and health authorities don't recommend hunting to control Lyme disease - because it doesn't work.

Sunday hunting won't help the DEEP "manage" deer numbers or resolve deer-related conflicts.

Wild animals have high compensatory reproduction abilities which easily offset losses caused by hunting. This means that their numbers bounce back by the next breeding season due to increased litter size, breeding at an earlier age, increased juvenile survival, etc.—all phenomenon that are biologically adapted to help wild animals recover from cyclic population losses. Hunting merely creates this bounce-back effect which in no way provides any population “control” unless a large proportion of the population is removed along with the food source and habitat features which attracted them in the first place—all of which present a virtual impossibility except in the rarest of cases.

This legislation takes us in precisely the wrong direction. The public does not want hunting on Sundays, and lifting the prohibition will jeopardize public safety and diminish outdoor opportunities for non-consumptive users.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Yours truly,



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