

Monday February 25, 2013

Environment Committee  
Connecticut General Assembly  
Legislative Office Building  
300 Capitol Ave  
Hartford, CT 06106

Senator Meyer, Representative Roy and Distinguished Members of the Environmental Committee:

I am writing regarding bill S.B. No. 915 AN ACT AUTHORIZING BOW AND ARROW HUNTING ON SUNDAY UNDER CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES. I am a Connecticut resident and a bow hunter of over 10 years and urge this bill be passed in the current session, and as a clean bill.

I know we in Connecticut face many challenges today; high unemployment, erosion of our private sector industrial base, quality of life degradation and budget deficits just to name a few. Bow hunting deer is a tremendous way for the State of Connecticut to help reach many of our goals and Sunday bow hunting can help even more.

First of all, what is the basis for prohibiting hunting on Sundays? As we know, from colonial times to the 19th century "blue laws" were enacted in accordance with Old Testament scriptures. Over the last 40 years or so, most of those laws have been rolled back. They don't seem to fit into 21st century America. I believe the Sunday hunting ban falls into the category of a law that has out served its usefulness. In fact it is now counterproductive.

The Congressional Sportman's Foundation calculated the impact lifting Sunday hunting bans can have on the economies of the states that currently have active bans. Their methodology included accounting for not only the direct impact by additional hunters licenses, hunting supplies, food, fuel, etc., but supplier activity like steel, wood, banking, mechanics, etc. that are traced back to the additional hunting activity. Lastly they studied the induced impacts of Sunday hunting activity in the form of wages, jobs, output created as a consequence of the direct and supplier economic activity. This report estimates that lifting the Sunday hunting ban in Connecticut will create a total of 496 jobs, wages of over \$14.2 million and over \$38 million of economic activity. I stress these figures are for Connecticut only! I believe we have never seen a time in the last half century where this sort of economic opportunity has been more important or meaningful to the citizen of this state.

I know that some people who are in opposition to Sunday hunting say there are safety issues. They believe that adults and children alike who enjoy the outdoors on Sundays will be put in danger. First of all, let's remember that if we don't have those issues on Saturday – which we don't, what makes Sunday so different? Currently there are only 5 states left with a total ban on Sunday hunting with Virginia being the latest to lift their ban. The other 45 states including our neighbor New York have not found any safety problems or even conflicts between hunters and non-hunters because of Sunday hunting. Why would we?

Furthermore, bow hunters in the vast majority of cases hunt from 10' – 15' high in trees. Most shots tend to be within 20 yards and seldom beyond 30. Therefore the trajectory of an arrow is at a steep downward angle eliminating the possibility of accidental shootings. Truly the primary form of injury in bow hunting is to the hunter themselves falling from their tree stands. Even this is a rare occurrence.

Connecticut residents know all too well the ramifications of a deer population out of control. These problems range from Lyme disease running rampant through our population, deer-car collisions, to natural flora disappearing from our state due to over browsing.

Looking at Lyme disease before we review cold, hard statistics, first consider what this disease is doing to our fellow citizens. Symptoms according to the Mayo clinic include flu-like symptoms, migratory joint pain which if not treated quickly can include swelling and last for months. Additionally, neurological problems like meningitis and Bells palsy syndrome can occur and less frequently but not unheard of, victims can experience irregular heart beat and even hepatitis. Now remember, that as children are a major percentage of the population that participates in the outdoors during the summer months when ticks are most active, they are the most vulnerable to this disease.

So how likely are we in the Nutmeg State to contract this insidious disease in comparison to other states? Looking at 2010 CDC statistics, we rank #6 in the nation for total cases with 3,068 behind New Jersey who ranked number 1 with 3,712 instances. Clearly a rank of #6 is nothing to brag about however that doesn't really tell the whole story. You must also consider population when looking at how many cases are diagnosed in a state. So let's look at Lyme disease cases/10,000 people. Of the top 6 states in overall diagnoses, Wisconsin has 6.13/10,000, our neighbor to the north Massachusetts has 4.98, New Jersey 4.22, Pennsylvania 3.00 and New York rounds out the top six at 1.77 per 10,000 residents. We in Connecticut experienced 8.72 cases per 10,000 residents. That gives us the #1 ranking and a 42% increase over the next nearest state (WI) and is 75% and 107% higher than Massachusetts and New Jersey respectively. Let's not overlook that all our neighboring States except New York have limited Sunday hunting opportunities. Is it a coincidence that New York has the lowest Lyme disease incidence? Clearly our unacceptable rate of Lyme disease correlates to our high density of deer.

Another downside of the high population is the incidents of deer-car collisions. State Farm published figures for 2010 and ranked states for likelihood of an accident. Connecticut ranks #12 on that list. Think about what that ranking does to all our insurance rates.

By allowing Sunday hunting we add another 16 days to our season. For many of us who work Monday – Friday we can only hunt one day/week. So those extra 16 days could almost double our days in the field. This sort of drastic increase in the percentage of days in the field could increase the harvest by a significant amount and will be the most effective means to getting our deer population back under control. This will allow the DEEP to much better control deer populations in all parts of the state.

Another perspective that I believe gets little thought is that how the current law affects the rights of property owners. Don't owners of private property have the right to allow what's legal for the other 6 days of the week on the 7th?

Think about the farmer trying to eke out a living like our colonial forefathers but is losing crops daily due to the never-ending browsing of our hooved friends. Why can't that farmer help protect his property and crops by allowing me to harvest some of those deer on Sunday when I'm off of work?

Lastly who are we – Connecticut bow hunters? We are people with an enormous love of the outdoors and respect for the flora and fauna of this state. We are good stewards of the environment and gladly support conservation through license fees and taxes on our purchases of hunting equipment and ammunition. Hunting is proven the most effective method of controlling the deer population and is humane. I believe we deserve to join the 90% of other states where its hunters can take to the field in the fall with our bows in hand and participate in the sport we truly love. Please pass S.B. 915 now....it's time!

Respectfully,

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