

Virginia Board of Game and Inland Fisheries: Official Position Regarding Hunting on Sunday in Virginia

RICHMOND – The Board of the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (the “Board”) declares its support for the repeal of the statutory prohibition on Sunday Hunting in Virginia.

Board Supports Lifting Statutory Prohibition on Sunday Hunting

WHEREAS, the right of the people to “hunt, fish, and harvest game” is protected by Article XI, Section 4 of the Constitution of Virginia, subject only to regulations and restrictions prescribed by the General Assembly; and

WHEREAS, Virginia’s Sunday laws can be traced back to the early British colonies in Virginia; then continued in the early 20th century ostensibly as a means of protecting Virginia wildlife populations from over hunting, and

WHEREAS, modern science confirms the Virginia ban on Sunday hunting serves no biological purpose and is counterproductive to matters of game management; and

WHEREAS, those states that have removed prohibitions on Sunday hunting have not experienced any discernible impact on the desirable health or vibrancy of game populations; and

WHEREAS, Sunday hunting will provide the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (the “Department”) and its biologists with a new tool to manage wildlife populations by encouraging increased and concentrated hunting in areas of overpopulation; and

WHEREAS, the Commonwealth has experienced a substantial decline in hunting participation by both in-state and out-of-state hunters over the past several decades, with license sales falling in both absolute and relative numbers; and

WHEREAS, youth participation is necessary to maintain a hunting tradition in Virginia, we can effectively double the number of hunting days for youth during the school year by opening Sunday, and

WHEREAS, Sunday hunting is an effective means of recruiting new hunters and increasing the value of the licenses for existing hunters of all ages by providing additional opportunity for adults and youth to spend time in the field; and

WHEREAS, Sunday hunting is expected to generate a substantial increase in out-of-state licenses sales and resultant revenues for the Department due to an additional weekend hunting day; and

WHEREAS, Sunday hunting will provide a substantial economic benefit to the Commonwealth's tourism industry, particularly in rural areas and businesses, by increasing the money spent locally by resident and non-resident hunters alike on hunting equipment, gas, food, lodging and other incidental items; and

WHEREAS, the Department is funded almost entirely by the constituents it serves, a large number of whom are hunters; and

WHEREAS, hunting license sales and their associated federal matching funds are the largest single revenue source available to the Department for carrying out its mission, including acquisition of public lands and private easements for wildlife management, hunting access and conservation; and

WHEREAS, Sunday hunting will help ensure that future generations have the opportunity to participate in a sport that is an important part of the Commonwealth’s heritage; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Game and Inland Fisheries recognizes that this facet of game management is entirely within the purview of the General Assembly; and

WHEREAS, if the General Assembly lifts the ban on Sunday Hunting, it is recognized that this action will affect a much broader stakeholder group than just hunters, and the Board will engage these groups in dialogue before passing any new regulations.

NOW, THEREFORE, we, the Board of the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, do hereby urge the General Assembly to **REPEAL** the **PROHIBITION ON SUNDAY HUNTING IN THE COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA**.