



U.S. Sportsmen's Alliance Sunday Hunting Testimony
Pennsylvania House Game and Fisheries Committee
June, 9, 2011

Chairman Evans, Chairman Staback and members of the House Game and Fisheries Committee thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today in support of repeal of the ban on Sunday Hunting in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Protecting &
Advancing
America's
Heritage
of Hunting,
Fishing &
Trapping

My name is Evan Heusinkveld and I am the Director of State Services for the U.S. Sportsmen's Alliance (USSA). I am here today as part of the Sunday Hunting Coalition which is comprised of the leading hunting and conservation organizations throughout the country.

In addition to USSA, the National Shooting Sports Foundation and the National Rifle Association, the coalition includes the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation, Archery Trade Association, Boone and Crockett Club, Cabela's, Delta Waterfowl, Mule Deer Foundation, National Assembly of Sportsmen's Caucuses, Pheasants Forever, Quail Forever, Quality Deer Management Association, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Safari Club International, and the Wildlife Management Institute.

All of these groups have united for one cause: Removing antiquated blue laws that treat sportsmen as second class citizens. At one point in our history, restricting activities on Sunday was common. Today however, these restrictions – also called “blue laws” are few and far between. Pennsylvania is one of only 11 states that continue to restrict or outright prohibit hunting on Sundays.

There are three main components to this debate that I would ask you to consider as you hear testimony on this subject - Economic Impact, Hunter Recruitment and Retention, and Property Rights.

It's no secret that states across the country are facing tough economic times. Many states, Pennsylvania included, are looking for new ways to help balance their budgets. Some are looking at new taxes, others at privatizing certain aspects of state government... but you have a solution and opportunity in Pennsylvania that is ready-made and will lead to immediate and continued new revenues for the state coffers.

In Pennsylvania alone there are more than 1 million hunters who each spend an average of 16 days per year afield. When sportsmen take to the field they buy gas, they buy groceries, they stay in motels and they buy sporting goods. They generate an enormous economic impact on local communities. It's estimated that the average hunter would spend nearly 5 more days a year in the woods. That's 5 additional days eating at the local diner and pumping gas at the local station.

In 2005, the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee conducted a comprehensive study which indicated that by simply allowing sportsmen to take to the field on Sundays during hunting season, it would generate \$629 million additional economic activity and over 5,000 new jobs. These figures are only bolstered by a similar report that the National Shooting Sports Foundation released earlier this year.

That study showed that today Pennsylvania would gain 8,000 new jobs and three-quarters of a billion dollars of economic activity. Moreover, this economic impact would be realized annually. In addition, it would generate over a hundred million dollars in local, state and federal tax revenue each year.

The numbers make it clear... allowing sportsmen and women to have the ability to decide if they want to hunt on Sunday would have a significant positive economic impact.

The second item I want to talk about is Hunter Recruitment. It was just a few short years ago that we came to you to ask for help with improving hunter recruitment and retention in the Commonwealth. Pennsylvania was one of the first states nationally to pass a Families Afield bill and establish a mentored youth hunting program. To date, more than 157,000 youngsters have been able to begin hunting in a safe and exciting manner in Pennsylvania alone as a result of that program. Yet, there remains one major road block to recruiting the next generation of sportsmen – the ban on Sunday hunting.

As most hunting seasons are open during the school year, most youngsters are only afforded the opportunity to hunt on the weekend. As many of you know first-hand, kids today have many competing interests for their time... be it a soccer game, music lessons or little league... many of these activities take place regularly on Saturdays. By not allowing a parent the opportunity to take their son or daughter hunting on Sundays, we are severely limiting the potential for recruiting new hunters.

Moreover, it's not only youth who are limited by this restriction, but many hard working adults are also affected. During tough economic times many people are finding themselves working 6 days a week, just to get by.

Restricting hunting on Sundays means fewer trips to hunting camp. It makes the guy who lives in the city think twice about driving to hunting camp after work on Friday, for just one day of hunting. It simply means less opportunity for those who aren't lucky enough to have the time off on Saturday.

These are sportsmen and women who, if given the opportunity, would gladly spend their hard earned dollars in pursuit of their passion. Unfortunately, they aren't able to make that decision today because of an outdated law from 1873.

This brings me to the final aspect I'd like you to consider - Property Rights. At the end of the day, this whole debate can be boiled down to a question of basic American freedom - as a property owner, do I have the right to decide whether I want to allow hunting on my land any day of the week. That's what this debate is all about - allowing citizens to make their own decision.

I want to be clear - our goal isn't to force anyone into hunting on Sundays and our goal isn't to force anyone to allow hunting on Sundays. Property owners will still retain all of the same rights afforded to them that they currently have. It will still be the property owner's decision to state IF and WHEN a hunter can access to the owner's land. Hunters will still be required to obtain permission to hunt private lands. We are in no way, shape, or form looking to change that. We are merely asking that the same laws that apply Monday – Saturday, are also applied on Sunday.

We are here today to ask that hunting be treated the same as any other recreational pursuit, including fishing, biking, bird watching, casino gambling, attending an NFL game or any of the countless other activities that take place regularly on Sunday.

Moreover, I want to clarify that this is not an effort to allow hunting all 52 Sundays in a year. Instead, we're requesting the legislative prohibition be lifted and that the Pennsylvania Game Commission be able to decide when and where it's appropriate to include Sundays in the established hunting seasons.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide testimony today. On behalf of the U.S. Sportsmen's Alliance, and the members of the Sunday Hunting Coalition, I respectfully ask for your support.