



Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs

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Providing leadership and advocacy for the enhancement of our fish and wildlife resources for the benefit of all hunters, anglers and conservationists. Protecting our 2nd Amendment Rights.

September 12, 2016

Subject: House Bill 2083

To: Honorable members of the Pennsylvania House State Government Committee

Recently, a coalition of respected conservation and hunting organizations voiced their strong opposition to House Bill 2083. This opposition was spurred in part by the potential loss of millions of dollars to our state.

HB 2083 has gained the attention of these national organizations because of the potential damage it could do to our state as related to federal funding which Pennsylvania receives. This funding is currently about \$25 million per year. This funding comes from the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Program. Revenue is collected from a federal tax on certain pieces of outdoor sporting equipment, then, sent back to individual state's wildlife resource agencies. In the case of Pennsylvania, that is the Game Commission.

Besides this coalition of state and national hunting partners, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) also conducted an analysis of HB 2083. USFWS has expressed concerns that this federal funding could be in jeopardy if a measure like HB 2083 would pass.

The Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs joins with these **respected partners in opposing HB 2083**. The jeopardizing these federal dollars is only one but a very important reason to oppose this bill.

Thank you for your consideration,

Sincerely,

John P. Kline
PFSC Director, Government Affairs



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Testimony Re: House Bill 2083 House State Government Committee September 20, 2016

Good morning Chairmen Metcalf, Cohen, and honorable members of the House State Government Committee. I am John Kline, Director of Government Affairs for the Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs. The Federation sincerely appreciates the Chairman's invitation to testify on House Bill 2083.

Founded in 1932, the Federation is the most active group of women and men working constantly in Harrisburg to protect and enhance the activities of hunting, fishing trapping and the exercise of second amendment rights for all Pennsylvanians. Currently the Federation represents approximately 210 sportsmen's clubs with about 70,000 members, a growing number of individuals, and several national organizations dedicated to outdoor pursuits, especially hunting.

The Federation joins with virtually all respected sportsmen's in **opposing HB 2083**.

My comments are divided into two sections. First, some perspective for State Government Committee members who usually don't have to hear testimony regarding a bill that affects Title 34, the Game Code. Second, my comments will be about the content of the bill itself.

Pennsylvania has a long and cherished history of hunting. Carried on for several generations, necessary for survival in years past and even today in some circumstances, hunting carries on the tradition of family and contributes to the commonwealth in a number of economic and social ways. Hunting is a necessary tool in wildlife management. Particularly in the management of white tailed deer.

Several years ago the Pennsylvania Game Commission, an independent state agency charged with managing all wildlife for all citizens, changed its deer management program to meet the challenges of the day which included overpopulation of deer in certain areas, outright destruction of forest understory and the threat of continued human contact that was not desired. Pennsylvania hunters harvested deer in such numbers that deer populations shifted in many areas of the state. In the last 15 years, the Game Commission has adjusted hunting opportunities to try to address these changes. These changes are things like license allocations, special regulations and seasons.

However, like all changes, the Commission's decisions were not met favorably by some. The longtime expectations of a small but vocal group of hunters was not the same as it used to be so there was an outcry.

You don't have to be a hunter to understand the passion we have for this pursuit and we're not afraid to share it. This feeling of concern and even anger over the changes were too much to handle for some. Sadly, these changes resulted in what we have today. A divided group of Pennsylvanians who simply don't and won't agree on the Game Commission's deer management program NO MATTER WHAT. Though the Game Commission has responded to these changes, it has not been enough for this small but vocal group. This divided group has fomented a recalcitrant attitude toward any change.

Divisions among Pennsylvania hunters spurred on by this angry group has resulted in more problems for hunters in the commonwealth than any anti-hunting group has ever done. This anger has metastasized into what we have before us. House Bill 2083. An attempt to strip away the responsibilities of an independent state agency charged with management of all wildlife for all Pennsylvanians. This responsibility would be shifted to a politically appointed special interest group.

As for the remaining content of the bill itself, I will not comment on the details of this bill any further as they are so preposterous that I would be wasting even more taxpayer dollars in your time as you listen. Suffice to say that this bill is a disaster. Tearing away the authority of an independent agency of the commonwealth whose duty it is to manage wildlife, and give it to a very small special interest group of angry, untrained and politically motivated members would be insanity.

The notion that a politically appointed "Forestry Council" could somehow propose, or worse yet, mandate wildlife management is beyond the pale.

As stated in my opening comments, the Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs joins all **respected** sportsmen's groups and adamantly opposes this bill. The Pennsylvania Game Commission is the most qualified organization to manage wildlife. Your predecessors in the legislature recognized that and created the Commission to exercise this authority. Even in times when we citizens may disagree with the Commission's decisions, there are ample ways to air grievances and properly affect change. House Bill 2083 is not one of them.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.