



Testimony for Sunday Hunting in Maine

My name is Luke Hilgemann and I am the CEO of Hunter Nation – the fastest-growing grassroots organization in the country focused on uniting hunters to protect our outdoor lifestyle. We have members across the country who are concerned hunters. They are concerned because they’ve seen what happens when we, as hunters, sit on the sidelines – our lifestyle and the positive impact that hunters have on the economy get attacked and our rights get restricted.

As most hunters would agree, we’d honestly prefer spending time in the deer blind rather than by a ballot box, and walking through our property rather than working through a legislative process that can, with all due respect, discourage someone from participating in government affairs.

But, since our organization has started, we’ve seen that we can make a positive impact from coast to coast by informing our members about the policy debates happening in their own backyards.

One of those policy debates we’ve been watching closely is the ban on Sunday hunting in Maine – a so-called leftover “blue law” that doesn’t serve the interest of Maine’s economy, Maine’s conservation, or Maine’s hunters.

Here’s what this debate should be about: does this law hurt or help Maine’s economy? Does this law hurt or help Maine’s conservation efforts? Does this law hurt or help Maine’s hunters?

Without a doubt, Maine’s economy is hurt by this law. In 2020 in Maine, 152,000 hunters spent \$210 Million on hunting-related purchases. When we restrict a full weekend day of hunting, that negatively impacts the total dollars that could help stimulate the economy. How many more hunters would plan longer trips in the state if they knew they could hunt a whole extra day? They would spend another night booking a hotel or cabin, another night heading to the local bar for dinner after a successful hunt, and another day shopping for their hunting needs at your local stores. How many hunters don’t have the ability to hunt if they can’t hunt on Sunday, because of the long hours they are working to support their families?

Maine’s conservation efforts are also hurt by this law. In 2020, nearly \$10 million went to Maine through the Pittman-Robertson Act and Dingell-Johnson Act. Both of these laws are vehicles that our government

depends on to help conserve land and both of these laws are directly impacted by how much hunters are spending. Funding for this federal support comes on direct taxes for purchases for hunting and fishing gear. Logically, this literally means that less money spent on hunting and fishing directly leads to less conservation of Maine's God-given natural resources.

Finally, this law hurts Maine's hunters. If you're a parent like me or have been a parent, you know how challenging our schedules can become on the weekends. Sports, activities, and normal household chores often keep me out of the woods more than I like. So, in Maine, if you're a parent trying to introduce your children and grandchildren to the sport of hunting, you have only ONE DAY to do that outside of work and school hours. How can we expect to inspire another generation of hunters when that's the case? Without that future generation, as I previously explained, Maine will experience less economic activity in their local communities, less resources for conservation efforts, and, sadly, a decline in all of the rest and replenishment that being in the great outdoors gives our population.

To conclude, most hunters uphold the highest standards in ethics and common sense and don't trespass on lands they don't have permission to be on. So, to the landowners who are opposed to this bill my question is if trespassing isn't a problem on Saturday when hunting is allowed what makes Sunday different?

At Hunter Nation, we like to talk about hunting with truth, logic, and commonsense. In Maine, if we apply truth, logic, and commonsense to this debate – allowing Sunday hunting is a no-brainer.

Soon, Maine may be the only state in the entire country that doesn't allow Sunday hunting, and that would be a shame for a state whose motto is Latin for "I lead."

I encourage you to lead by passing this bill to allow Sunday hunting so that we all can lead the effort to further help local economies, enhance conservation efforts, and ensure that Maine's hunting heritage lasts for future generations.

Sincerely,

Luke Hilgemann
CEO of Hunter Nation