

**TESTIMONY OF SUSANNA RICHER –
IN OPPOSITION TO
“L.D. 820, Resolution Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine
to Establish the Right to Hunt and Fish”
Committee On Inland Fisheries and Wildlife
March 12, 2025**

Senator Baldacci, Representative Roberts, and distinguished members of the Committee:

Thank you for considering my testimony regarding “L.D. 820, Resolution Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine to Establish the Right to Hunt and Fish”

The intent of LD 820 appears to be to silence Maine citizens concerned about unethical or ecologically unsound hunting and trapping practices and prevent citizens from initiating initiatives on wildlife-related issues. L.D. 820, says that “the right of the people of this state to hunt, fish and harvest game and fish, including by the use of traditional methods, may not be infringed ...” It also provides that “public hunting and fishing are a **preferred** means of managing and controlling wildlife.”

The bill is redundant and unnecessary.

Hunting rights are not in jeopardy. Hunters and trappers are a powerful minority in Maine, not a persecuted one. Their privilege is already cemented in state statute.

1. In 2015, the Department's mission statement **was legislatively changed** to make hunting, fishing and trapping (not science) the preferred basis for managing our state's wildlife. This is already in effect in Maine and does not need to be duplicated through a constitutional amendment.

§10051. Department established

*The Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife is established to preserve, protect and enhance the inland fisheries and wildlife resources of the State; to encourage the wise use of these resources; to ensure coordinated planning for the future use and preservation of these resources; to provide for effective management of these resources; **and to use regulated hunting, fishing and trapping as the basis for the management of these resources whenever feasible.** [PL 2015, c. 416, §1 (AMD).]*

2. For the past 35 + years, hunters and trappers have been given full access to hunt and trap on more than half a million acres of land purchased with Land for Maine's Future Program funds. Because the agency's funding depends on income derived from the sale of licenses, guns and ammunition, MDIFW largely functions to serve hunter and trapper interests, not the broader public. As a result, hunting and fishing opportunities continue to grow in Maine. That is unlikely to change.

What is “reasonable” and who decides?

Section 26 of this proposal states... “subject to **reasonable** laws enacted by the Legislature, and **reasonable** rules adopted by the state agency designated for fish and wildlife management as provided by statute, to promote wildlife conservation and management and to preserve the future of hunting and fishing.”

While I appreciate the author's inclusion of a clause that pretends to protect the Department's ability to maintain and or create new laws to protect our shared wildlife resources, I strongly object to the word “reasonable” in this context, as reasonableness is subjective. Since constitutional law can supersede state law, this language would open existing and future wildlife protection statutes, such as Sunday hunting, to a wide array of unnecessary and potentially damaging legal challenges.

Perhaps it would be more appropriate to replace the word “reasonable” with a more quantifiable term such as “science-based”?

What are the definitions of “Harvest” & “Traditional methods”?

The wording of the bill, such as the vague, undefined terms “harvest” and “use of traditional methods,” could enable the reintroduction of practices and tools that are unacceptable to the public. What “traditional methods” are included? How could we ensure they would be safe, rational and ethical? If L.D. 820 becomes law, the public would have no legal pathway to object to trapping brutality, or to the use of tools currently banned, such as snares and slingshots.

We have already blurred the lines by including the word “harvest” in the recent constitutional amendment regarding the Right to Food. Further enshrining the word “harvest” in connection to killing animals whether it be for food, “management” or for “recreation” (fun?) is unethical especially when related to recreational hunting, trapping, and fishing where the animal is not killed for sustenance. ***Should killing for fun be a constitutional right?***

While the word “harvest” is often used by government wildlife and fisheries agencies as a more palatable term for killing or reporting number of animals killed, the proposal equates the act of killing wildlife (for any reason) with gathering berries or harvesting a field of corn. We harvest fruits, vegetables, and grains. We slaughter livestock. We kill wildlife.

This is a [NRA backed constitutional change](#) that favors a small special interest group (hunting/ fishing lobby) over the welfare of the general public and science based wildlife management. Do we want the NRA to have the power to change our state constitution?

“The Maine Constitution is primary law. It provides basic architecture for government and society. One of its key purposes is to “promote our common welfare.” Over nearly 200 years, it has been amended more than 170 times, but never to give special privileges to one class of citizens and rescind the right of other citizens to have a voice on critical matters of public interest such as wildlife management.” (PPH, 4/2017, *Latest NRA-driven right-to-hunt bill mocks Maine’s Constitution*)

Hunting is a privilege not a right. We don’t harvest animals; we kill them. We do not “own” wildlife; we hold wildlife in public trust. Wild animals are not ours to do with as we please.

For the above reasons, please vote “Ought not to pass” on L.D. 820. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Susanna Richer
Portland, ME

Sources

It’s Not Just the Second Amendment Anymore

How the NRA is larding state constitutions with frivolous, redundant “right to hunt” amendments.

<https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2012/12/right-to-hunt-how-the-nra-is-larding-state-constitutions-with-frivolous-redundant-amendments.html>

Commentary: Latest NRA-driven right-to-hunt bill mocks Maine’s Constitution

<https://www.pressherald.com/2017/04/20/commentary-latest-nra-driven-right-to-hunt-bill-mocks-maines-constitution/>

Chapter 903: Department Of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife

Subchapter 1: Department Established

<https://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/statutes/12/title12sec10051.html>