



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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I offer my thanks for taking the time to allow me to introduce to the committee LD 439, *"An Act to Preserve Maine's Sporting Heritage and Enhance Sporting Opportunities for Maine's Youth by Allowing Maine's Youth to Hunt on Sunday"*. The bill's concept is not limited to youth hunting on Sundays during open seasons, but as a possible solution to a potentially looming crisis of conservation and wildlife habitat funding in Maine. My name is Donny Ardell, and I represent House District 6.

Maine is renowned for its sporting opportunities, but that reputation was earned through wildlife conservation, and was not always the case; in the early part of the 20th Century, wildlife habitat depletion, largely through mechanized farming and irresponsible forestry techniques, put Maine's once-abundant wildlife in severe decline, with fear of some species, such as moose, disappearing altogether. Hunter-funded conservation programs, such as 1937's *Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act*, 16 USC 669, commonly known as the *Pittman-Robertson Act*, routed the funds gathered through a federal excise tax on firearms and ammunition and provided dedicated funding to save the day. *Pittman-Robertson* allocations are accessed by state funds that are typically sourced through hunting license fees paid to the state, as well as fees on tags for additional game opportunities or game species, such as antlerless deer tags or tagging fees. Through this allocation method, any given U.S. state is limited to no more than 5% and no less than one half of 1% of total *Pittman-Robertson* allocations, which last year were \$914M overall, with Maine's allocation being \$10.3M. The main takeaway is that any given U.S. State's access to critical wildlife conservation funds hinge on sportsmen and women buying licenses.

But those license sales are dropping, licensed hunters are decreasing as a percentage of Maine's population; with fewer licensed hunters, Maine loses the ability to access that matching *Pittman-Robertson* funding for wildlife conservation, and loses to other U.S. states that funding to acquire and manage critical wildlife habitat.

Back to Sunday hunting, my experience was different than Maine's. Growing up in Upstate New York, a typical winter Sunday morning involved church, followed by grilled cheese and tomato sandwiches, and after that, a January, February, or March afternoon in the snow with my father, my brother, and I hunting cottontails. I later took up big game hunting on my own, but those experiences led me to a lifetime interest in wildlife conservation, mentoring of my own children and other young hunters in their own love of

the outdoors, and the habitat management of a property of my own in Aroostook County. Those experiences led me on a long path to your committee to present LD 439.

That link as a young person to the outdoors is critical. Speaking from personal experience, without those Sundays in New York, where Sunday hunting was permitted, that seed would never have been planted in me. In Maine's big game season, Maine's youth get at most ten days: Youth Day and Friday Youth Day, State Resident Opener, four Saturdays, two holidays, and the days before and after Thanksgiving. The rest is school, and school gets out too late to be able to meaningfully hunt afternoons. Saturdays can be loaded with school activities or sports that would preclude a day afield, and other interests, activities, or 'screen time' can, and apparently are, replacing Maine's sporting heritage among our young people. Hunting license sales are down, because the seed is never planted. Permitting Sunday hunting for youth under 16 with an adult mentor, or to age 18 with completion of the Hunter Safety Course when enrolled in secondary school, would provide at least five more days of big game hunting alone, an almost 41% increase in hunting opportunity for Maine's youth not involved in sports or other Saturday activities, and a 71% increase in increase in hunting opportunity for youth whose Saturdays are otherwise engaged. I think those days, and that time of mentoring with a trusted adult, would be enough.

I'm sure you'll hear other testimony today, in opposition, saying that if this bill were to become law landowners would close their property to hunting altogether, or that non-hunters would like to enjoy the fall woods without hunters present. My response to that is that private landowners can do that anyway, and that we need hunter involvement, and to generate young hunter interest, to be able to fund the wildlife conservation efforts available to Maine. Declining hunting license sales is not going to work, and is not working. I'm certain that parents, grandparents, and family friends would be open to guiding Maine's youth on Sunday were it treated the same as Youth Day, and that those bonds of friendship through activity would last a lifetime until a mentoring opportunity arises for that young hunter who was mentored him or herself. Maine's hunting opportunities are so abundant, in 2022 IF&W, for the first time, sold over-the-counter antlerless deer tags to hunters in many zones of the state with no limit, tens of thousands of tags, and many zones didn't sell out. Sunday hunting for Maine's youth could solve three challenges at once: recruit sufficient hunters to meet IF&W's deer conservation goals, generate enough state funding through license and tag sales to more fully engage Maine's portion of *Pittman-Robertson* federal funding, and to set the hook with Maine's youth, all but guaranteeing their future involvement in Maine's sporting heritage.

I have an 'on-the-fly' amendment to the bill language as submitted:

Remove: "E. The hunting equipment is carried by a person supervising a person hunting in accordance with the requirements of section 11108-C and the supervised person is hunting pursuant to section 11205, subsection 1-A." I don't know why, exactly, the Revisor's Office thought to add the supervising adult carry hunting equipment, except maybe in transport, but having the adult supervisor carry hunting equipment, or themselves hunt, isn't part of the intent of the bill.

Regarding the “or” in subsection 9. B., I don’t know if it is entirely necessary:

“9. Possession of hunting equipment on Sunday. Possession of hunting equipment in the fields or forests or on the waters or ice in the State on Sunday is prima facie evidence of a violation of section 11205, unless:

- A. The hunting equipment is carried, securely wrapped, in a complete cover;
- B. The hunting equipment is fastened in a case; or
- C. The hunting equipment is carried in at least 2 separate pieces in such a manner that it cannot be fired, unless the separate pieces are joined together. For the purpose of this subsection, a clip, magazine or cylinder of a firearm may not be considered a piece of the hunting equipment. Archery equipment must be kept in a case or cover if broadheads or field points are kept attached to the arrows or bolts.”

I close saying with conviction that every day not enjoying Maine’s sporting opportunities as a youth is a missed opportunity to recruit young sportsmen and women, and a missed opportunity to contribute to Maine’s wildlife conservation as an adult. Thank you, and I appreciate your consideration of this bill as a way forward.

Sincerely,



Donald J. Ardell
State Representative

	U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE			
	FINAL APPORTIONMENT OF PITTMAN-ROBERTSON			
	WILDLIFE RESTORATION FUNDS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2025			
	TOTAL WILDLIFE FUNDS-5220	TOTAL BASIC HUNTER ED	TOTAL ENHANCED FUNDS	TOTAL - ALL WILDLIFE
STATE	CFDA: 15.611	CFDA: 15.611	5230 CFDA: 15.626	FUNDS (FY25)
ALABAMA	\$17,050,580.00	\$3,523,008.00	\$179,553.00	\$20,753,141
ALASKA	\$37,471,191.00	\$1,569,689.00	\$80,000.00	\$39,120,880
AMERICAN SAMOA	\$1,249,039.00	\$261,615.00	\$13,333.00	\$1,523,987
ARIZONA	\$19,859,450.00	\$4,709,067.00	\$240,000.00	\$24,808,517
ARKANSAS	\$14,050,698.00	\$1,569,689.00	\$80,000.00	\$15,700,387
CALIFORNIA	\$24,264,650.00	\$4,709,067.00	\$240,000.00	\$29,213,717
COLORADO	\$20,723,320.00	\$4,048,509.00	\$206,340.00	\$24,978,169
CONNECTICUT	\$3,747,119.00	\$2,528,475.00	\$128,863.00	\$6,404,457
DELAWARE	\$3,747,119.00	\$1,569,689.00	\$80,000.00	\$5,396,808
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0
FLORIDA	\$11,898,857.00	\$4,709,067.00	\$240,000.00	\$16,847,924
GEORGIA	\$25,363,371.00	\$4,709,067.00	\$240,000.00	\$30,312,438
GUAM	\$1,249,039.00	\$261,615.00	\$13,333.00	\$1,523,987
HAWAII	\$3,747,119.00	\$1,569,689.00	\$80,000.00	\$5,396,808
IDAHO	\$16,567,838.00	\$1,569,689.00	\$80,000.00	\$18,217,527
ILLINOIS	\$12,933,603.00	\$4,709,067.00	\$240,000.00	\$17,882,670
INDIANA	\$9,972,545.00	\$4,709,067.00	\$240,000.00	\$14,921,612
IOWA	\$11,527,682.00	\$1,569,689.00	\$80,000.00	\$13,177,371
KANSAS	\$15,968,225.00	\$1,569,689.00	\$80,000.00	\$17,617,914
KENTUCKY	\$11,738,282.00	\$3,159,474.00	\$161,023.00	\$15,058,779
LOUISIANA	\$15,921,890.00	\$3,266,003.00	\$166,452.00	\$19,354,345
MAINE	\$8,669,127.00	\$1,569,689.00	\$80,000.00	\$10,318,816
MARYLAND	\$3,770,882.00	\$4,331,448.00	\$220,759.00	\$8,323,089
MASSACHUSETTS	\$3,747,119.00	\$4,709,067.00	\$240,000.00	\$8,696,186
MICHIGAN	\$20,929,296.00	\$4,709,067.00	\$240,000.00	\$25,878,363
MINNESOTA	\$21,869,565.00	\$4,001,374.00	\$203,928.00	\$26,074,867
MISSISSIPPI	\$11,748,311.00	\$1,569,689.00	\$80,000.00	\$13,398,000
MISSOURI	\$19,551,698.00	\$4,315,804.00	\$219,956.00	\$24,087,458
MONTANA	\$22,467,131.00	\$1,569,689.00	\$80,000.00	\$24,116,820
N. MARIANA ISLANDS	\$1,249,039.00	\$261,615.00	\$13,333.00	\$1,523,987
NEBRASKA	\$14,573,652.00	\$1,569,689.00	\$80,000.00	\$16,223,341
NEVADA	\$15,367,134.00	\$1,569,689.00	\$80,000.00	\$17,016,823
NEW HAMPSHIRE	\$3,747,119.00	\$1,569,689.00	\$80,000.00	\$5,396,808
NEW JERSEY	\$3,747,119.00	\$4,709,067.00	\$240,000.00	\$8,696,186
NEW MEXICO	\$17,725,410.00	\$1,569,689.00	\$80,000.00	\$19,375,099
NEW YORK	\$17,944,248.00	\$4,709,067.00	\$240,000.00	\$22,893,315
NORTH CAROLINA	\$19,901,558.00	\$4,709,067.00	\$240,000.00	\$24,850,625
NORTH DAKOTA	\$11,583,353.00	\$1,569,689.00	\$80,000.00	\$13,233,042
OHIO	\$12,820,008.00	\$4,709,067.00	\$240,000.00	\$17,769,075
OKLAHOMA	\$16,350,838.00	\$2,776,282.00	\$141,496.00	\$19,268,616
OREGON	\$18,660,525.00	\$2,971,151.00	\$151,427.00	\$21,783,103
PENNSYLVANIA	\$28,112,690.00	\$4,709,067.00	\$240,000.00	\$33,061,757
PUERTO RICO	\$3,747,119.00	\$261,615.00	\$13,333.00	\$4,022,067
RHODE ISLAND	\$3,747,119.00	\$1,569,689.00	\$80,000.00	\$5,396,808
SOUTH CAROLINA	\$8,179,476.00	\$3,589,022.00	\$182,919.00	\$11,951,417
SOUTH DAKOTA	\$14,020,538.00	\$1,569,689.00	\$80,000.00	\$15,670,227
TENNESSEE	\$21,254,742.00	\$4,709,067.00	\$240,000.00	\$26,203,809
TEXAS	\$37,471,191.00	\$4,709,067.00	\$240,000.00	\$42,420,258
UTAH	\$15,914,876.00	\$1,569,689.00	\$80,000.00	\$17,564,565
VERMONT	\$3,747,119.00	\$1,569,689.00	\$80,000.00	\$5,396,808

\$914,392,695