

Testimony in Support of Maine LD820: A Resolution to Create a Constitutionally Protected Right to Hunt and Fish

Chairwoman, esteemed members of the committee,

My name is Kenia Link, representing the International Order of T. Roosevelt (IOTR) and T. Roosevelt Action.

Our organizations are committed to preserving President Theodore Roosevelt's legacy, advocating for conservation and the rights of outdoor enthusiasts. I'm here to support securing and enhancing hunting and fishing rights for all Americans, including Mainers.

Hunting and fishing are vital to Maine's economy and way of life. Hunting generates \$363 million annually and supports about 4,000 jobs. Fishing contributes nearly \$1 billion and supports tens of thousands of livelihoods. These activities are crucial to the state's economic fabric.

Maine's lobster industry, contributing \$540 million annually, is also part of your cultural identity. The connection between hunting, fishing, and the lobster industry highlights the need to protect these rights for both economic and cultural reasons.

The right to hunt and fish has been recognized across the U.S., beginning with Vermont in 1777. Florida recently became the 24th state to constitutionally protect these rights, with 67% of voters supporting the amendment. IOTR, TRA, and over 70 other organizations played a key role in this success. Maine should follow this example.

Additionally, the Pittman-Robertson and Dingell-Johnson conservation programs provide essential funding for Maine's wildlife and resources. Last year, Maine received \$23 million from Pittman-Robertson and \$3.9 million from Dingell-Johnson. Protecting hunting and fishing rights ensures these programs continue, benefiting ecosystems for future generations.

Hunting and fishing are deeply woven into Maine's traditions, but the state's constitutional right to food protection doesn't extend to fishing. This gap makes a significant part of your outdoor economy vulnerable. LD820 is vital to closing that gap and to enshrine hunting and fishing as constitutionally protected rights.

In an era of growing food security concerns, hunting and fishing offer renewable, healthy protein sources. Protecting these rights guarantees future generations of Mainers sustainable food options.

In closing, I would like to express my gratitude to the chairwoman and members of this committee for your time and consideration. I stand ready to work alongside you to preserve what your organization's namesake, President Theodore Roosevelt, loved—the great outdoors and the wildlife of Maine.

Right to
Food States?
VT
CA - fishing
KS