



**Humane  
World for  
Animals**

Formerly called the Humane  
Society of the United States and  
Humane Society International

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**Testimony in Opposition to LD 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 3, 2025**

Senator Baldacci, Representative Roberts and members of the Committee on Inland Fisheries & Wildlife:

My name is Katie Hansberry and I am the Maine state director for Humane World for Animals, formerly called the Humane Society of the United States. On behalf of our Maine supporters, I ask the committee to oppose LD 820, a far-reaching proposal that seeks to codify cruel, outdated, and ineffective practices into our state's constitution and putting this unnecessary language in our constitution is a solution in search of a problem.

**1. LD 820 would enshrine into our constitution the use of practices widely opposed by the public.**

LD 820 states that the citizens of Maine have the right to hunt, fish and harvest game and fish, including by the use of "traditional methods." But in its manual "IN DETAIL: State Constitutional Amendments and the Right to Hunt and Fish" the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation advises the use of the vague term "traditional methods" for hunting practices that the public no longer supports, such as the trapping, hounding, and baiting of native carnivores. *[Fig. A]*

Indeed, there is no question that the American public no longer supports these methods. A 2019 survey by the hunting groups the National Shooting Sports Foundation and Responsive Management found that the majority of Americans disapprove of trophy hunting and of trapping for money, for fur clothing, and for recreation.<sup>1</sup> The landmark "America's Wildlife Values" project also found that a nearly 10% more Maine residents surveyed hold a "mutualist" view, which seeks to coexist with wildlife, than hold a "traditionalist" view of human mastery over wildlife.<sup>2</sup> That survey also found that 68% of Mainers agree that the U.S. should strive for environmental protection over economic growth. And a 2016 research study also found drastically improved public attitudes nationwide toward traditionally feared and misunderstood species including wolves and coyotes, noting that "The differences in attitudes witnessed in this study may be indicative of growing concern for the welfare of animals – both wild and domestic."<sup>3</sup>

*Fig. A*



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Another concern with such language is to what extent it protects traditional means, namely, trapping. Trapping admittedly faces a lot of controversy in this country, much more so than more mainstream ways of hunting, such as by firearm or bow and arrow. While all traditional means should be protected, some practices like trapping can make support harder to get from parties that are otherwise pro-hunting in a general election. By using a vague term like "traditional methods," it will be up to state agencies to determine what they include in their season as "traditional methods." Thus, the language both suggests that agencies should accommodate traditional means of hunting, while at the same time avoiding specificity so that the agency's hands are not tied. If an agency decided that trapping was no longer prudent, it would not make sense to constrain them to having to keep some sort of trapping language. "By the use of traditional methods" empowers the agency make the decision.



Further, by using a phrase like "traditional methods," proponents can give a stronger protection to trapping without actually mentioning trapping. Some non-hunters see hunting as an acceptable and even effective means of conservation, but at the same time view trapping as an inhumane version of hunting. It would be very unfortunate for a right to hunt/fish/manage amendment to fail because of explicitly using the word trapping when "traditional means" offers much of the same protection to trappers regardless. Granted, "by the use of traditional methods" does not offer the explicit level of protection as does specifically including "trapping."

At the same time, however, "by the use of traditional methods" could also help to protect other methods of hunting that have come under scrutiny, such as the use of dogs or baiting, which, as discussed above, was recently on the referendum in Maine. Alternatively, if a drafter makes a list of specifics and

Maine's wildlife is simply worth far more alive than dead. Wildlife watchers now outnumber and outspend hunters and trappers by a wide margin nationwide.<sup>4</sup> The National Park Service reports, "In 2023, 3.9 million park visitors spent an estimated \$479 million in local gateway regions while visiting National Park Service lands in Maine. These expenditures supported a total of 6,820 jobs, \$254 million in labor income, \$434 million in value added, and \$752 million in economic output in the Maine economy."<sup>5</sup>

According to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis-Dept. of Commerce, outdoor recreation in Maine generated more than \$3 billion for the state's economy in 2023. Of that figure, hunting and trapping generated less than 1%, while snow activities generated almost five times more than that. And people spent nearly 79 times more on travel and tourism in Maine than on hunting and trapping.<sup>6</sup> [Fig. B]

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service reports that in 2024, 85% of Maine's citizens did not hold a paid hunting license.<sup>7</sup> But despite decreasing hunting numbers, drastically changing public attitudes toward wildlife, the rapidly increasing numbers of—and spending by—non-



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consumptive users, and the overwhelming economic value of Maine's wildlife while still alive, LD 820 would still permanently enshrine the use of inhumane, unsporting, and unpopular killing methods in our state's constitution and hinder future efforts to modernize and improve how our wildlife is managed.

**Fig. B. Outdoor recreation spending in Maine (2023 data from U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis)**

Sample activities	Spending (in thousands of dollars)	% of total
Hunting and trapping	18,969	0.6
Snow activities	108,214	3.2
RVing	264,995	7.7
Other outdoor recreation <sup>8</sup>	388,780	11.3
Travel and tourism	1,495,782	44
Total Outdoor Recreation	3,431,843	100.00

## **2. LD 820 could impede management decisions based on the best available science**

LD 820 also mandates that "public hunting, fishing, trapping, and harvesting of wildlife shall be a preferred means of managing and controlling wildlife." This could complicate situations in which hunting or trapping may not be feasible, such as in highly populated areas, to manage federally protected species, or in cases in which citizens wish to resolve wildlife conflicts with the use of proven-effective, non-lethal methods.

Giving preference to hunting and trapping over other management options could also present serious roadblocks to invasive and injurious species control and could lead to decisions in which sound science is discounted or ignored.

## **3. LD 820 could cost Maine taxpayers millions of dollars in lawsuits**

Establishing a constitutional "right to hunt" could cost Maine taxpayers millions by opening the door to expensive legal challenges from individuals who want to argue that reasonable quotas, season closures, bag limits, land area closures, and other restrictions on types of hunting, trapping, and fishing methods are unconstitutional.

For the above stated reasons, we ask you vote ought not to pass on LD 820. Thank you for your time and consideration.



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