



Craig V. Hickman
Senator, District 14

THE MAINE SENATE
132nd Legislature

3 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333

Testimony of Senator Craig V. Hickman introducing
LD 1343, "An Act to Protect the Right to Harvest Wildlife,"
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife
Wednesday, April 9, 2025

Senator Baldacci, Representative Roberts, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, my name is Craig Hickman, and I am proud to represent Senate District 14, twelve municipalities in southern Kennebec County including my beloved hometown of Winthrop. Thank you for the opportunity to introduce LD 1343, "An Act to Protect the Right to Harvest Wildlife."

This bill defines the verb "harvest" in statute to further clarify the matter and to declare the people of the State have a right to harvest wildlife by hunting, fishing, and trapping, subject to regulation.

The following language was included in the Maine Supreme Judicial Court's opinion in *Virginia Parker et al. v. Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife*, ruling that the right to Sunday hunting was not included in Maine's Right to Food Amendment:

"Although the amendment itself does not define "harvest," Me. Const. art. I, § 25, for the following reasons, we conclude that the plain language of the amendment unambiguously enshrines a limited constitutional right to hunt:

- (1) "dictionaries define "harvest" as including hunting, see *State v. Marquis*, 2023 ME 16, ¶16, 290 A.3d 96 ("In determining the plain mean of statutory language in the absence of a statutory definition, we frequently look to dictionary definitions."); *Avangrid*, 2020 ME 109, ¶ 14, 237 A.3d 882 ("We construe constitutional provisions by using the same principles of construction that we apply in cases of statutory interpretation."); *Harvest*, Webster's New World College Dictionary (5th ed. 2016) (defining "harvest" as "to gather in (a crop, etc.) [or] to catch, shoot, trap, etc. (fish or game)"); *Harvest*, New Oxford American Dictionary (3d ed. 2010) (defining "harvest" as to "catch or kill (animals) for human consumption or use."); *but see Harvest*, Webster's II New College Dictionary (4th ed. 2001) (omitting any reference to the hunting, catching or killing of animals in the definition of "harvest");
- (2) "we have previously applied a definition of "harvest" that includes hunting, *Wuori v. Otis*, 2020 ME 27, ¶ 4 n.2, 226 A.3d 771;

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(3) “statutory sources, like the general definitions of Part 13 of Title 12, which covers the Department and contains the ban, further confirm that “harvest” is widely used in Maine statutes to refer to hunting. See 12 M.R.S. § 10001(31) (2023) (“Hunt. To ‘hunt’ means to . . . harvest wild animals . . . or attempt to . . . harvest wild animals.”); *see also, e.g.*, 12 M.R.S. §§ 12301-A to 12351 (2023) (Chapter 919: Registration and Transport of Harvested Animals); and

(4) “the Maine Legislature continues to propose legislation that would create further examples where “harvest” includes hunting. See, e.g., 15 L.D. 1823 § 21 (131th Legis. 2023) (“**18-A. Harvest**, the verb. The verb ‘harvest’ means to gather, forage, catch, trap, hunt, fish, take or kill for human consumption, sport, wildlife management or population control.”).”

That last reference was to LD 1823, which I presented as an omnibus bill to the Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Committee last session to protect and respect the Right to Food. This session, I presented LD 124, “An Act to Protect the Right to Food,” to the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry. This bill, LD 1343, is being submitted to this Committee, as the Department requested last session, because the proposed text applies to your respective policy area.

Please join me in voting unanimously to clarify that the Right to Food in Maine’s Constitution includes the right to harvest wildlife by hunting, fishing, and trapping, subject to regulation.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to introduce this bill. I am happy to answer questions you may have.

Craig V. Hickman
State Senator, District 14