



Maine Professional Guides Association

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Opposing LD 309 An Act To Require a Nonresident To Hire a Licensed Maine Guide To Hunt Big Game

Good morning Senator Dill, Representative Landry and distinguished members of the committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife. I am Don Kleiner I live in Union and am representing roughly 1000 guide members of the Maine Professional Guides Association each of them a Maine based small business.

The Maine Professional Guides Association has a long history of opposing the requirement that hunters from another state or country be required to hire a guide. In fact I opposed it at least once in the mid 1990's. The most recent version was passed in 2007 was scaled back in 2009 and was subsequently repealed completely.

It is not that our members don't want additional business, we certainly do. We feel that the proposed law unfairly singles out a few nonresident hunters. To be certain there are states that require nonresidents to hire guides for certain types of hunts, a particular species or even in more challenging regions. As we currently do; requiring a nonresident bear hunter using hounds to have a Registered Maine Guide on the hunt

Each of those regulations is specific to a certain activity or region and near as I can tell in response to a specific concern. I believe that the proposal in front of you is far less specific. While if I went to Alaska to hunt coastal brown bears, I would need, and actually want, a guide. The environment and the species demands a level of knowledge and care I simply do not have. However, I would not need a guide in the interior of the state to hunt black bear. How are we to sort out that level of requirement under this proposal. Will all Alaskans be required to hire a Maine guide to hunt white tailed deer?

We are proud to say that guides provide a valuable service to their clients, showing them where to pursue a particular game animal or bird and the best methods for hunting the intended quarry. While we encourage all nonresident hunters to employ the services of a guide, nonresidents from states or provinces that require guides have no greater need for those services than nonresidents who happen to be U.S. citizens from Idaho or from say the Yukon in Canada.

I have a hard time understanding that only those few hunters from those regions are so unqualified to hunt in our state that they must be required by law to hire guides or that the economic impact delivered by hunters from those few states or regions would be so great to our members.

Many of our members offer not only guided hunts but also provide lodging and meals to nonresident hunters as a way to diversify their businesses. Over the last few years, we have made great strides with the Department and the Maine Office of Tourism promoting Maine as a potential hunting and fishing destination across the country. I believe that the department has license sales numbers that will prove the positive results of that effort. We feel that the proposal before you will communicate the wrong

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message about coming to hunt in Maine at exactly the wrong moment. I would offer that this proposal sends a discouraging message to many potential customers not only of guides but also non guided hunters perhaps some who even own land here. We do not want to send the message that we do not want them to travel here to hunt or fish.

Finally, in the bill summary there is a requirement that the department have reciprocal agreements with any state or province that hunters might come from, spelling out that hunters from Maine and the sending state would be allowed to hunt in their respective states without hiring a guide. I cannot imagine that this would be accomplished efficiently enough to not impact the business success of our membership over the next few years. A timespan that is already looking like a challenge to those rural small businesses.

For that reason, I encourage you to not support LD 309. Thank you very much for your consideration in this discussion. I look forward to answering any questions that you might have.