

April 21, 2021

Testimony in Opposition to

LD-1033, An Act To Allow Sunday Hunting on Private Property with the Written Permission of the Landowner

LD-1054, An Act To Allow Hunting on Sundays with Written Consent on Private Property

LD-1212, An Act To Allow Sunday Hunting North of U.S. Route 2 from the New Hampshire Border to Bangor, North of Route 9 from Bangor to the Canadian Border and within That Portion of the White Mountain National Forest inside the State

Senator Dill, Representative Landry and members of the Inland Fisheries & Wildlife Committee:

My name is Bob Meyers and I'm a resident of Bath. I am retired and during my career I served for almost 25 years as the executive director of the Maine Snowmobile Association. A large part of my job involved working with both large and small landowners across the state. I have also spent a significant amount of my professional life involved in Maine's tourism industry. During those 25 years, I've lost count of how many Sunday hunting bills I have testified against before this Committee. Not a single one of them has ever passed.

This Committee doesn't need to be reminded of the significant impact outdoor recreation has on Maine's economy. The basis of that activity is Maine's remarkable tradition of public access to private land across the state. Maine's generous private landowners allow this activity, and not without a cost. They spend time working with groups to establish snowmobile and ATV trails, mapping baiting sites for bear hunters, cleaning up after recreationists who fail to do so, in addition to managing their property for its intended use. All they ask in return is that land users treat their property with respect and obey whatever simple rules the landowners have established for their property.

I have heard loud and clear over the years both from in-person meetings and from independent surveys of landowner attitudes that Sunday is the one day that they want to have for their own. Given the recreational opportunities they have made available on their property, it is a minor yet important request and should be respected.

Both LD-1033 and LD-1054 offer something to landowners by granting them the option to hunt on their own property on Sunday, something that I'm not convinced they are seeking. At the same time, it imposes an additional burden on them by requiring them to provide written permission to those who do wish to hunt on their property. Given how a lot of people plan, I can imagine a scenario where hunters are knocking on a landowner's door for permission on Sunday – the landowner's day.

LD-1212 establishes a boundary line to allow Sunday hunting, not unlike many bills in the past that proposed it for the unorganized territories, or other geographic boundaries. It ignores the fact that there are hundreds of small landowners north of that line and also that large industrial landowners need a day too when they don't have to deal with secondary activities on their property.

Sunday is the one day of the week that landowners can call their own, and it should remain that way. There isn't another issue that can generate anger like Sunday hunting, and imposing it on landowners is taking something valuable from them with little recourse. That little recourse though is one of the few weapons they have to counter proposals like this – they can post their land and prohibit all activities. A modest gain for one segment of the outdoor community could result in significant losses for many.

I urge you to reject these three bills and show Maine landowners the respect they deserve by giving them one of the few things they ask for – one day.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony.

Bob Meyers  
Bath, Maine