

**TESTIMONY OF SUSANNA RICHER
IN OPPOSITION TO SUNDAY HUNTING PROPOSALS: L.D. 1033, L.D. 1054 & L.D. 1212
Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife
April 21, 2021**

Senator Dill, Representative Landry, and distinguished members of the Committee:

Thank you for considering my testimony in opposition to all three Sunday hunting proposals before you today.

Residents who voluntarily open their land up to hunters are not the only citizens impacted by hunting activities on the land in question. Citizens who live on bordering land or in the general vicinity of land open to hunting, are subject to many challenges - gunshot noises, stray bullets, exposure to injured wildlife and the legal trespass of unaccompanied hunting dogs on posted property. Six days a week of this type of intrusion is sufficient.

I live in the outskirts of Portland. I am fortunate to live off fresh water on the border of Falmouth near publicly and privately owned woods and trails. There is a wide array of wildlife in my area – deer, turkeys, fox, raccoons, woodchucks, coyotes, even the occasional wayward bear. Despite residing in a suburban area, I experience many of the disturbances associated with hunting. During peak hunting seasons, I am awakened every morning (except for Sundays) by the sound of gun shots from hunters. Not only is it nerve wrecking to start my day with the sound of bullets, but as a lover of wildlife, it is also heartbreaking. I wake with a pit in my stomach, my first thought is of the animal(s) associated with the gun shots.

Additionally, my rescue dogs are terrified of gun shots, which makes them scared to leave the house when hunters are active in my area. Just taking them for a morning walk once they have heard gun shots can be a challenge. The one day we sleep late and walk in peace is Sunday. Please do not take that away.

I have two friends who live 40 miles apart from each other in rural Maine. They both have invested the time and money into posting their land as “no hunting.” Despite closing their land to hunters, each one experiences ongoing trespass by unaccompanied hunting dogs usually in pursuit of coyotes. A completely legal occurrence under Maine law. To landowners who enjoy seeing animals at peace in nature, witnessing hounds in deadly pursuit of wildlife, especially on property that is intended to be a safe haven, is horrifying. Since there is no closed coyote season in Maine, both individuals live in constant anxiety and fear on their own property. Their only day of ceasefire is Sunday.

The act of giving written or verbal permission to individuals to hunt on private land on Sundays does nothing to nullify the impact of hunting related noise or to address the safety concerns for humans and pets that live nearby.

Honestly, I cannot understand why we have to re-visit Sunday hunting every legislative session. Six days a week is more than enough opportunity for the 10% of Maine residents who hunt to participate in this “sport “. The 90% of Maine taxpayers who do not hunt, need, and deserve to keep their one weekend day of peace.

If the committee is going to consider passing Sunday hunting with landowner permission, then to balance the scales of fairness to property owners, it should also repeal Maine’s implied right-to-access policy and make it necessary to obtain landowner permission to hunt on private property 100% of the time. Hopefully, it does not come to that and the committee does the right thing by continuing its tradition of maintaining hunting-free Sundays in our state.

We all deserve a day of respite. Especially the animals. Please vote “ought not to pass” on L.D. 1033, L.D. 1054 & L.D. 1212.

Thank you for your consideration.

Susanna Richer
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