

## **Testimony of Austin Birkemeier**

Before the Ohio Senate General Government Committee

In Support of SJR8, Establishing a Constitutional Right to Hunt and Fish

November 18, 2025

Madam Chair Senator Roegner and Members of the General Government Committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today in support of SJR8, which would establish a constitutional right to hunt and fish in the Ohio Constitution. My name is Austin Birkemeier, and I am a lifelong resident, hunter, angler, and conservationist from Auglaize County. From my early days in the Boy Scouts, to fishing on my high school fishing team, and now leading a National Wild Turkey Federation Chapter in my home county, the outdoors has always been a fundamental part of my life. Many of us in the room have fond memories in relation to hunting and fishing. From catching our first fish or harvesting our first animal, these are moments we not only cherish ourselves, but opportunities we need to protect for the generations to come.

Hunting and fishing are more than just recreational activities, they are deeply rooted in Ohio's history, economy, and conservation ethic. For generations, these pursuits have connected Ohioans to the land, taught respect for our natural resources, and fostered a sense of stewardship for our environment. By enshrining the right to hunt and fish in our state constitution, we ensure that future generations can continue to participate in and benefit from these traditions.

It's important to note that this proposal does not change the way wildlife is managed in our state. It simply recognizes hunting and fishing as fundamental rights, while maintaining the authority of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources to regulate seasons, methods, and limits to protect Ohio's wildlife populations and ensure safety. This balance safeguards both our natural resources and the freedoms of responsible sportsmen and women.

There are also strong economic reasons to support this amendment. According to recent studies, hunting, fishing, and related outdoor recreation contribute billions of dollars each year to Ohio's economy, supporting thousands of jobs in rural communities, small businesses, and conservation programs funded through license sales and excise taxes. Protecting these activities in our constitution helps secure that economic foundation for years to come.

Finally, this amendment reaffirms Ohio's commitment to conservation. Hunters and anglers were among the first conservationists, and their license fees and federal excise taxes continue to provide the backbone of wildlife management funding in our state. Recognizing their rights in our constitution honors that legacy and strengthens public support for sound, science-based management.

In closing, I urge you to support this amendment to protect the right to hunt and fish in Ohio. This measure is not about politics, it is about preserving freedom, heritage, and the responsible stewardship of our natural resources for future generations.

Thank you for your time and for considering my testimony.

Respectfully,  
**Austin Birkemeier**  
Saint Marys, Ohio  
Member of the National Wild Turkey Federation  
Member of the International Order of T. Roosevelt