

Chairman Schaffer, Vice Chairman Huffman, Ranking Member Fedor, and members of the Senate Agriculture & Natural Resources Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Joint Resolution 3.

First I would like to give you a brief summary of my qualifications that allow me to speak on this important subject. I am presently the President of the Ashtabula County Wildlife Conservation League and have been for ten years. The County League is a conservation organization which consists of thirteen individual conservation clubs in Northeast Ohio with a total active membership of close to four thousand outdoor enthusiasts. I am also the District 3 Vice-President for The League of Ohio Sportsmen—a conservation organization that represents conservation clubs throughout all of Ohio. Along with that I am also the treasurer for the Sheffield Conservation Club (located in Ashtabula County) as well as a life member of several other conservation clubs.

I am also a certified NRA, Rifle, Pistol, Shotgun, Chief Range Safety Officer and Conceal Carry Instructor, a certified Boy and Girl Scout and 4H Counselor in the disciplines of rifle, pistol, shotgun, and archery. I have also been the voice of the outdoors in Ashtabula County for fifteen plus years, writing a weekly column, “Inside The Outdoors, published by the Gazette Newspaper Group. And Last but not least I am a Certified Ohio State Hunter Education and Bowhunter Education Instructor.

Of all the outdoor sports certifications I hold, I cherish most those which afford me the opportunity to work with, and for, the Boy Scouts and various 4H groups as well as my service as an Ohio State Hunter and Bow Hunter Education Instructor. The overriding reason for my affinity with these groups owes to the fact that my wife, Janie, and I deal primarily with children in these classes.

There is nothing like watching a child’s eyes light up when you tell them they’ve passed their Hunter Education exam and can now purchase an Ohio hunting license. Along with that, there is no better praise than that of a proud parent when they hear the news and freely express their gratitude for the instruction which we offer. Further, they are thankful that there are people like us who are willing to volunteer and lend our time, without any pay— other than the satisfaction that their children are the lucky beneficiaries of our service. It is also heartwarming for us to know that these children are also major participants in the proliferation of our hunting heritage.

Typically, when these children leave our class, we very seldom hear from them again. But every once in a while a young child, a teenager, or even an adult, will come up to us and say, “ Hi Mr. Dale or Mrs. Janie do you remember me? I took your hunter education class back in the spring or fall or even several years ago.” Then they’ll say, “I harvested my first rabbit, squirrel, pheasant, turkey, or maybe even a deer.” Some have pictures on their phone and show us. No matter how big or small their harvest is, we always give them an unsurmountable amount of praise. To them their harvest was a trophy. For us, it means we’ve touched a young person’s life and hopefully strengthened their resolve to live a productive life and pass on our heritage.

Over the years, we have taught hundreds, probably closer to thousands, of newcomers, both young and old, in the proper, safe, and ethical facets of the hunting and shooting sports across every gamut of our certifications.

But today, I’m here to hopefully convince you to cement the traditions and heritage that my father passed on to me 65 years ago as a young boy running behind him in the fields, meadows, and woodlots of Ohio, hunting rabbit, squirrels, pheasant, turkey, and eventually, big game.

If we can sustain that flame in our youth and pass on our hunting heritage to future generations, our youth, our wildlife, and the great state of Ohio will be better off for it. That’s what Senate Joint Resolution 3 is all about—passing it on! In every one of my articles there’s a tag line at the end of one of the featured stories which simply states, “Remember, pass it on or it will surely pass on.” Please help us make sure we can pass it on.

Lastly, in purely economic terms, the hunting of deer and other wild game provides an economic boon for the entire State of Ohio. A recent Ohio State University study found that roughly nine million hunting trips are taken in Ohio every year, with hunters spending \$800 million here annually. Additionally, Ohio’s regulated hunting season helps to mitigate damages to crops. Quite simply, an oversized deer population can cause thousands of dollars in losses for our farmers. Statewide, losses could easily range in the millions if the herd were not culled annually. Further, by harvesting a good number of deer every year, we are able to make our highways safer for motorists. Those of you who, like me, drive a great deal, can attest to the number of deer hit by motorists. Just imagine the carnage to animals and the potential harm to humans if there were not a regulated hunting season. Hunting makes absolute sense from a variety of perspectives when we pause to thoughtfully and purposefully reflect on it

In closing, Chairman Schaffer, Vice Chairman Huffman, Ranking Member Fedor, and members of the Senate Agriculture & Natural Resources Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Joint Resolution 3. I will now open the floor to any questions you may have.