



State Representative Ron Ferguson
State Representative Nick Santucci

House Energy and Natural Resources Committee
Sponsor Testimony for House Joint Resolution 5
October 25th, 2023

Rep. Ferguson

Chairman Kick, Vice Chair Lear, Ranking Member Rogers, and members of the House Energy and Natural Resources Committee: thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Joint Resolution 5.

House Joint Resolution 5 proposes to enact Section 22 of Article I of the Ohio Constitution to establish a constitutional right to hunt and fish. Should HJR 5 pass the legislature, it would appear on the November 2024 general election ballot.

Hunting and fishing are more than just recreational activities—they're deeply rooted in our Country's heritage. Despite this history, many states have taken a proactive approach in ensuring these activities are protected for future generations. Since 1996, 22 states have amended their constitution to include the right to hunt and fish.

Enshrining the right to hunt and fish has been viewed as a necessary step for many states due to the rise in anti-hunting legislation, as well as costly litigation. For example, an organization in Oregon is currently collecting signatures for a state statute that would appear on the November 2024 ballot, which would criminalize hunting and fishing.¹ Examples of states where the legislature has considered or is currently considering legislation infringing on the right to hunt and fish include Colorado,² California,³ and New Jersey.⁴ While sponsors of these bills often claim they are protecting animals, they instead erode public safety and hurt wildlife conservation. Passing HJR5 ensures that hunting and fishing are preserved for future generations of Ohioans.

Chairman Kick, Vice Chair Lear, Ranking Member Rogers, and members of the House Energy and Natural Resources Committee: thank you again for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on HJR5. I will now allow my colleague and joint sponsor, Representative Santucci to further explain this legislation.

Rep. Santucci

Chairman Kick, Vice Chair Lear, Ranking Member Rogers, and members of the House Energy and Natural Resources Committee: thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Joint Resolution 5.

¹ [https://ballotpedia.org/Oregon_Prohibit_the_Injury_or_Killing_of_Animals_Initiative_\(2024\)](https://ballotpedia.org/Oregon_Prohibit_the_Injury_or_Killing_of_Animals_Initiative_(2024))

² <https://leg.colorado.gov/content/prohibit-trophy-hunting>

³ https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=202120220SB252

⁴ <https://www.njleg.state.nj.us/bill-search/2022/S2409>



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Hunting and fishing in the state of Ohio serve not only as recreational activities, but as significant revenue sources for our state economy. \$866 million was spent in 2020 on hunting related purchases by 479,000 hunters in Ohio. The economic impact of hunting in our state has translated to 15,500 jobs for Ohioans, which produced \$753 million to the state GDP and \$68 million in state and local tax revenue.⁵ Overall, hunting contributed \$1.3 billion in 2020 to Ohio's economy.

Additionally, according to the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, the top ten counties in Ohio for the 2022-2023 deer harvest were Coshocton, Tuscarawas, Muskingum, Ashtabula, Knox, Licking, Holmes, Guernsey, Carroll, and Trumbull, where my district is located.⁶ Eight of these counties are in the Appalachian region, where both Representative Ferguson and I represent. Six of these counties include economically distressed areas according to the Appalachian Regional Commission.⁷ In these distressed areas, not only does hunting serve as a common recreational activity, but as a source of sustenance.

The right to hunt and fish in Ohio needs to be protected, not only as forms of sustenance and recreational activities, but as major economic drivers that make our state attractive as an out-of-state tourist industry.

Chairman Kick, Vice Chair Lear, Ranking Member Rogers, and members of the House Energy and Natural Resources Committee: thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony today. Rep. Ferguson and I would be happy to answer any questions at this time.

⁵ <https://sportsmensalliance.org/reports/ohio/>

⁶ <https://ohiodnr.gov/discover-and-learn/safety-conservation/about-ODNR/news/ohios-final-2022-23-deer-harvest-report>

⁷ <https://www.arc.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/CountyEconomicStatusandDistressAreasFY2023Ohio.pdf>