



Memo

To: Chairman Kick, members of the House Energy & Natural Resources Committee

From: Rob Sexton, Sportsmen's Alliance

Date: November 14, 2023

Re: Support for House Joint Resolution 5

Mr. Chairman, members of the House Energy and Natural Resources Committee, I am here on behalf of the Sportsmen's Alliance to testify in support of House Joint Resolution 5, which would establish the right to hunt and fish in Ohio. The Sportsmen's Alliance protects the rights of Americans to hunt, fish and trap. The organization was founded in 1978, and is still headquartered right here in Columbus, Ohio.

The Sportsmen's Alliance was created by Ohioans in response to a growing and powerful movement of animal rights extremists, who oppose our very way of life in relation to animals. This movement has attacked the use of animals for food. The use of animals for life saving medical research. And of course, hunting and fishing for animals. The animal rights lobby raises hundreds of millions of dollars each year, and uses these funds to impact laws involving agriculture, hunting, fishing and trapping in the legislature, in the courts and on the ballot.

American sportsmen and women are a laudable group of people. It was hunters who conceived the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation, in which people would buy licenses and permits for the opportunity to hunt and fish. Funds from these purchases have literally bankrolled the incredible conservation success story that is now taken for granted in our country. These funds are augmented by excise taxes on the sporting arms, ammunition, archery equipment and fishing gear that we use for these outdoor sports. Here in Ohio and across the country, sportsmen and women willingly foot the bill for conservation, and it's a record we're very proud of.

It's also a record that has benefited Ohioans who do not hunt or fish. Our dollars have funded the acquisition of hundreds of thousands of acres of habitat accessible to all who live here, paid for by these dollars. Our investment also goes toward clean water in Lake Erie and other waterways in Ohio. And our funds pay for endangered species programs that have brought the bald eagle and the otter back to the point that it is now commonplace for people to see these iconic species.

Ohio's benefit from sportsmen and women doesn't stop in the wild. Hunting and fishing are great economic drivers in this state and across the United States. Hunting and fishing are multi-billion-dollar industries in Ohio producing jobs, and tax revenue far beyond the outdoors.

Sportsmen and women don't normally raise a lot of fanfare for this enormous benefit. It's literally just our lifestyle. But at the same time, hunters, anglers, and trappers are not inherently political people. Most of us would much rather be in a tree stand, walking a field or in a boat with a line in the water than to be here at the statehouse or in a courtroom defending our way of life from extremists, who live on concrete and can't relate to where we came from.

Hunting and fishing are natural rights, and far predate the existence of this country. They provide sustenance, self-reliance, and a bond between friends and family who have passed down this heritage for thousands of years. It is a healthy lifestyle that routinely gets people off the couch, away from their devices and reconnects them with the earth that sustains us. House Joint Resolution 5 recognizes these natural rights.

The intent of this legislation is to protect our heritage and all of the public benefits that it produces from attack by those who would see it end. HJR 5 would allow the voters of Ohio to protect hunting and fishing as a constitutional right. A right that goes far beyond the writings of the founders on issues like speech and the right to assemble. A fundamental right that goes directly to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

Ohio sportsmen and women are the "goose that lays the golden egg," managing wildlife populations, pumping billions into our economy, and providing a wholesome and healthy lifestyle for all who choose to enjoy. At its heart, America is about freedom. HJR 5 protects a fundamental and ancient freedom.