



January 24, 2023

Delegate James Edmunds
Chairman, Natural Resources Subcommittee; House Agriculture, Chesapeake and Natural
Resources Committee

Re: House Bill 1989; Coyote and Furbearer Hunting Contests

Position: Oppose

Dear Chairman Edmunds and Members of the Committee,

I respectfully encourage you to oppose HB 1989 which would make it unlawful for hunters to participate in coyote or furbearer hunting contests. Very few states have similar prohibitions, and we are concerned that the legislation would reduce opportunities for Virginia's sportsmen and women, decrease participation in hunting, and negatively impact conservation funding for the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR).

Founded in 1989, the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation (CSF) is the informed authority across outdoor issues and serves as the primary conduit for influencing public policy. Working with the Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus (CSC), the Governors Sportsmen's Caucus (GSC), and the National Assembly of Sportsmen's Caucuses (NASC), CSF gives a voice to hunters, anglers, recreational shooters, and trappers on Capitol Hill and throughout state capitols advocating on vital outdoor issues that are the backbone of our nation's conservation legacy.

Coyote and predator hunting contests help maintain interest in hunting by incentivizing participation and extending hunting opportunities following the conclusion of most big game seasons. The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated a resurgence in hunting interest, and states across the nation reported sharp upticks in license sales and hunter education enrollment. We encourage the legislature to focus on expanding access and opportunity for these new recruits to turn them into lifelong license purchasers, rather than decreasing hunting opportunities. If HB 1989 is signed into law, opportunities for Virginia's hunters would be reduced which is contrary to the hunter recruitment, retention, and reactivation (R3) initiatives in the Commonwealth that aim to increase participation in hunting.

Your Inside Connection to Outdoor Legislation

The DWR relies heavily on funding generated by the sale of hunting licenses, and the decline of hunters in Virginia therefore poses a threat to the ability of the DWR to effectively carry out its mission and its conservation programs for game and nongame wildlife. In 2020, sportsmen and women in the Commonwealth generated \$63.66 million¹ through the “user pays – public benefits” American System of Conservation Funding to support the conservation efforts of the DWR. A portion of this revenue was generated through sportsmen and women pursuing coyotes and other predators, and in many cases, these hunters were participating in hunting tournaments. HB 1989 would not support the sale of hunting licenses or firearms, ammunition, and other hunting-related goods that contribute to conservation funding for the Commonwealth.

In closing, we respectfully urge you to oppose the legislation that would reduce opportunities for Virginia’s sportsmen and women, decrease participation in hunting, and negatively impact conservation funding for the Commonwealth. Thank you for considering our comments, and please let us know if you have questions or would like additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "JWC", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

John Culclasure
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¹ *Virginia: American System of Conservation Funding Fact Sheet*. Congressional Sportsmen’s Foundation.
Available online at: https://congresssionalsportsmen.org/uploads/page/Virginia_ASCF_Fact_Sheet_2021.pdf.