



# ROB STAFSHOLT

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 29<sup>th</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

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I would like to thank Committee Chairman Kleefisch and the other Committee Members for having this hearing on AB 455 that I authored along with Senator Moulton's companion bill SB 362. It is with a sad heart that I cannot be at the hearing today as I am back in my district for the opening of the \$660million St Croix Crossing Bridge linking daily commuters from my district to Minnesota. I would also like to express my gratitude to Rep. Rob Brooks for reading my testimony for me today.

I am disappointed I could not be there because this bill speaks to the core of what I stand for. This bill and bills like this are some of the biggest motivations to run for office for me. AB 455 is a change to the mentored hunting program we have here in Wisconsin. My bill removes the age requirement to be a "mentee" in one of these programs and it also changes the current law to allow both the mentor and a mentee to have what is defined as a "hunting devise" in the language. I will refer to that "devise" as a weapon. What this means is that parents would now decide if, and when their child is ready to participate in a mentored hunter program and not the government. I am sure you will hear lots of facts and numbers today so I won't bombard you with a ton of them now. Here are a few very important ones I would like you to remember:

1. 42 states in this country have a mentored hunting program, and of those, 34 states permit mentored hunting under the age of 10. Think about that – that's approximately 81% of the states! My district is way over towards the western edge of Wisconsin so nothing is worse for us "cheeseheads" up there than being outdone by the "mud ducks" in Minnesota – well guess what? Minnesota allows mentored hunting under 10 years of age.....as does Iowa, Illinois, and Michigan – every one of our bordering states.
2. I have a 14 year old daughter that has been going on hunting trips with me since she was in a car seat. My number one mission on this earth is her safety and well-being bar none. You may hear people today say this bill creates some kind of safety concern. As a father, I simply would not be the author of AB455 if that was the case. Make no mistake, accidents happen. But do you know who is the safest group of hunters in the woods? Its mentored hunters! Statistics show that out of 1 million regular hunting license holders that the average number of hunting related shooting incidents is 50. In mentored hunting license holders the number of hunting related shooting incidents is reduced by over 80% to 8.2 per million!

People have questioned why my bill allows both the mentor and the mentee to have a weapon. The answer is two-fold. First, practicality says that the bow that fits mom might not work at all for her son she is mentoring. The .22 rifle that grandpa has may not fit his granddaughter and it is safer if the kids have weapons that fit them and they are able to control easier. So then give the kid the gun and the





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mentor go without right? Wrong, I truly believe that people – not just kids but any mentee – learn best by example. I can tell you as a young boy that if my dad even thought I wasn't paying attention to the direction of my muzzle.....well let's just say there was absolutely no question by me what his thoughts were about it. So I would watch him. I would watch my Grandpa Bob when I sat with him on a fenceline. And I would watch my Uncle Jerry when we got to the vehicle and it was time to unload weapons. I watched them closely to see how they handled their gun, how they controlled it in situations like turning around in a stand, crossing a fence, when you walked up to another hunter, angle and hand placement when unloading their firearms. I learned how to most safely handle the gun I had in my hands by watching the people who mentored me and how they handled the gun in their hands when we approached the same obstacle at the same time. What a great way to learn and put the words they said into a visual context.

This bill today is not about debating whether or not we should have a mentored hunting program, it is about letting parents choose when their kids are ready to participate instead of the government which knows none of them. I believe we have good parents in this state who want what is best for their children. I know that parents will realize that not every hunting opportunity is the same as our current law treats them. I know my daughter would have been fine squirrel hunting with a .22 at age 6 if it had been legal. Grouse hunting with a .410 shotgun a year or two later would have been warranted in my opinion. But I want to tell you that she had the opportunity to receive a bear tag through a transfer at age 10. She was not ready for that yet, I waited until she was 11 for that to happen. But that was my choice as a parent. It should have been my choice as a parent to take her on the squirrel hunt at age 6, or the grouse hunt at age 8.....*not the government's*. Some opponents of the bill will point out that not all parents make the right decisions all the time. That is true and we all know it, but I ask you this – how is it that our state government thinks Wisconsin parents are worse decision makers when it comes to their kids than the 34 other states that have faith in their parents decision making abilities? Is that true that our parents are less responsible in their parenting duties? I think not.

Please support AB455 and recognize that parents in Wisconsin are just as good at making these decisions as the other 34 states that trust their parents and are rewarded with the safest group of hunters in the field.

Thank you,

Rep. Rob Stafsholt





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# JOEL KLEEFISCH

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 38<sup>TH</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

## **Assembly Bill 455: Relating to: Mentored Hunting**

### *Assembly Committee on Natural Resources and Sporting Heritage*

Good morning, Vice-Chairman Quinn and members of the committee. Today, we are holding a hearing today on Assembly Bill 411. This bill will improve Wisconsin's Hunting Mentorship Program and help recruit more hunters to the field.

Today, at least 38 states have adopted a mentored hunting program. These mentored hunting programs are successful, with nearly half of all mentees nationwide continuing to participate in the sport after their mentor experience.

In 2009, Wisconsin enacted its mentored hunting program. The program allows a new hunter to try the sport under the close supervision of an experienced mentor. Since its inception, the program has been a great success. Every year, thousands of new hunters experienced hunting through the mentored hunting program.

Under current law, in order to participate in the mentor program, a minor must be at least 10 years of age. This legislation removes that age requirement and will allow children of any age to participate in a mentored hunt. It is interesting: currently in Wisconsin, a 5 year old can sit in the backyard and shoot a gun without supervision, yet a 9 year old is not allowed to hunt with supervision.

Wisconsin is in the small minority of states that do not allow a parent to decide at what age their son or daughter is ready to begin hunting. Today, 40 states allow parents to make that decision.

Wisconsin's mentorship program also restricts the number of hunting devices allowed during a mentored hunt. This legislation removes that restriction.

Wisconsin is one of only 4 states, out of 39, that restricts the number of hunting devices allowed during a mentored hunt. This restriction is a disincentive for potential mentors, who are forced to choose between acting as a mentor and hunting themselves.

Wisconsin has a long tradition of sporting heritage and we should be leaders in all things outdoors. Unfortunately, we are lagging behind when it comes to mentored hunting, sending families and potential hunters across our borders to participate in a past time Wisconsinites hold so near to their hearts. It is my hope you will see this legislation for what it is, a common sense update to what is, and can continue to be a successful recruiting tool for hunters statewide. Thank you.





# TERRY MOULTON



WISCONSIN STATE SENATOR

23<sup>RD</sup> SENATE DISTRICT

**From:** Senator Terry Moulton  
**To:** Assembly Committee on Natural Resources and Sporting Heritage  
**Re:** Testimony on Assembly Bill 455  
**Relating to:** Age and hunting restrictions applicable to the hunting mentorship program.  
**Date:** August 2, 2017

Mr. Chairman and committee members, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today about Assembly Bill 455 and changes to Wisconsin's mentored hunt.

The legislature established Wisconsin's mentored hunting program in 2009, allowing a person to try hunting under the close supervision of an experienced mentor before they invest time and money in hunter education. This "try before you buy" model has been a huge success in recruiting and retaining new hunters. Last year, 26,000 new hunters participated in the mentored hunt and since 2009, more than 197,000 new hunters have used the program.

Assembly Bill 455 builds on this success by adopting safe and successful practices employed by dozens of other states, including all of Wisconsin's neighbors. Assembly Bill 455 removes the age restriction for mentees, aligning our law with 34 other states that trust parents to decide when a child is ready to hunt with a mentor. Additionally, the bill removes the requirement that a mentor and mentee share a single hunting device. Wisconsin is one of only four states that require a mentor and mentee to pass a hunting device between them in order to hunt. Sharing a device is a disincentive to potential mentors who are forced to give up hunting in order to mentor. This bill allows a mentor and mentee to decide if sharing is the best option for them.

Despite a majority of states having no restrictions on age or the number of hunting implements used during a mentored hunt, participants in a mentored hunt remain the safest hunters in the woods. Nationwide, a mentee has six times fewer incidents than the general hunting population, just 8.2 incidents per million participants, compared to 50 incidents per million among the general hunting population.

This bill has broad support from many sporting groups, including the National Sportsmen's Alliance, the National Shooting Sports Foundation, the National Wild Turkey Federation, the Safari Club, the Wisconsin Bear Hunters Association, and the Wisconsin Firearm Owners, Ranges, Clubs and Educators, Inc.

Hunting is a vital part of our sporting heritage and our mentorship program has proven extremely effective in recruiting new hunters statewide. I ask that you vote in favor of Assembly Bill 455, making it easier for more mentors and mentees to participate in this important program. Thank you again for allowing me to testify today.

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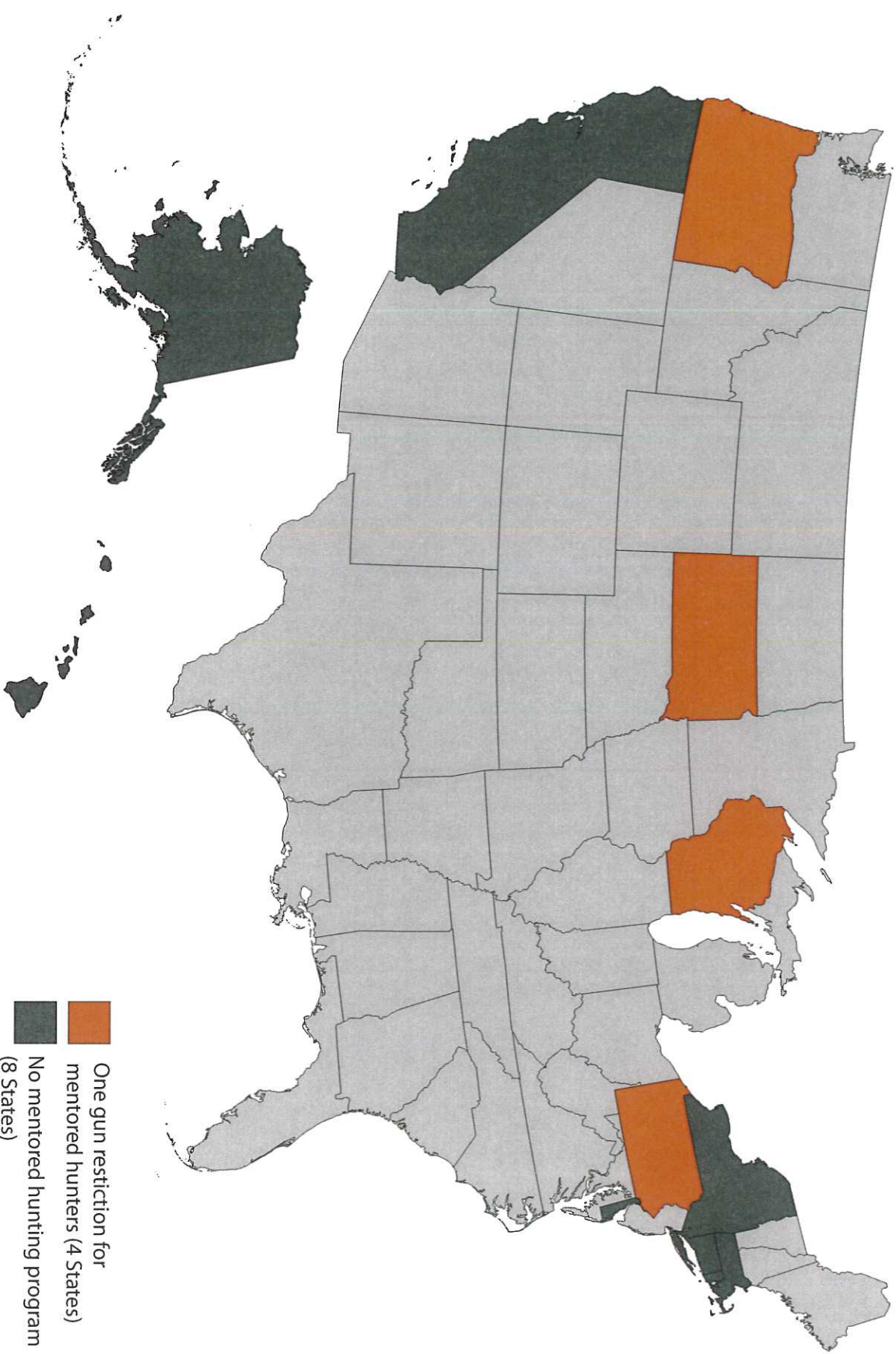
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# Mentored Hunting Gun/Bow Regulations

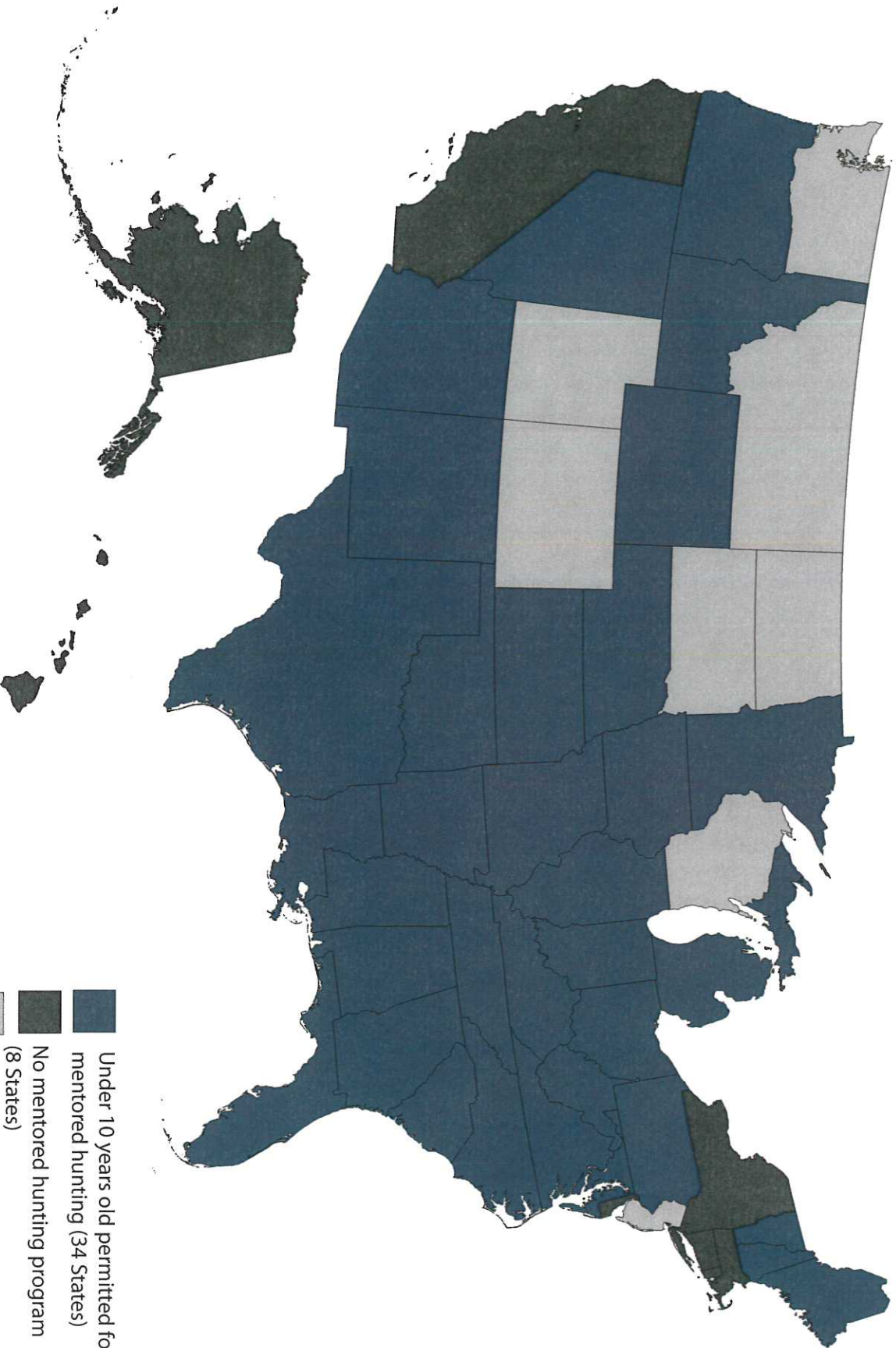


-  One gun restriction for mentored hunters (4 States)
-  No mentored hunting program (8 States)
-  No gun/bow restrictions for mentored hunters (38 States)





## Mentored Hunting States



- Under 10 years old permitted for mentored hunting (34 States)
- No mentored hunting program (8 States)
- Under 10 years old not permitted for mentored hunting (8 States)



## Wisconsin Wildlife Federation

Good morning Chairman Kleefisch and members of the Assembly Natural Resources and Sporting Heritage Committee. My name is Ralph Fritsch and I am a Past President and a current Board Member of the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation.

The Federation was a major supporter for the enactment of the Hunting Mentor Law two sessions ago in the Wisconsin Legislature. We worked very closely with the Wisconsin Hunter Education Instructors Association, one of 200 organizations members of the Federation, in working with the Legislature on a very carefully crafted bill allowing Wisconsin youth to receive practical field experience in hunting prior to obtaining a hunter safety course certificate.

The current law was a carefully crafted compromise to allow early exposure of youth to achieve hands-on training with an experienced hunter in the skills and safety procedures of hunting while still assuring that the experience would actually be a true mentoring experience with the focus on the youth, without the mentor being distracted with their own hunting experience. That is why the bill was carefully crafted so that between the mentor and the youth that there would be only one firearm used between the two hunters. During the mentoring experience the sole focus of the mentor should be on teaching the youth the outdoor skills necessary to track and harvest an animal and more importantly how to handle a firearm safely for the benefit of the mentor, the youth and the general public hunting or recreating in the area.

The Federation strongly opposes AB 455 unless the bill is modified by removing the provision which deletes the requirement that during a mentored hunt only one firearm be allowed for the mentor and the student.

On behalf of the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation thank you very much for the opportunity to testify before you today.

Submitted by Ralph Fritsch  
Wisconsin Wildlife Federation  
August 2, 2017





## OPENING THE DOOR TO THE NEXT GENERATION OF AMERICAN HUNTERS

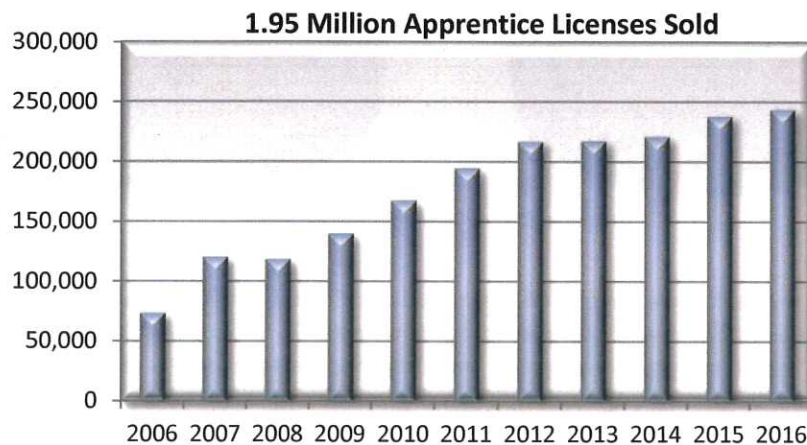
Over the past 30 years, the percentage of Americans hunters has been on a steady decline. This means less money for wildlife management programs and fewer mentors passing along our hunting heritage. In addition, hunters are growing older, and we're running short on time to recruit and retain the next generation of American hunters.

The Families Afield program was established by the Sportsmen's Alliance, the National Shooting Sports Foundation, and the National Wild Turkey Federation in 2004 in an effort to reduce and remove unnecessary barriers that impede the next generation of sportsmen and women from joining our ranks. Along with the National Rifle Association and the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation, Families Afield legislation has been passed in 40 states resulting in 1,951,998 apprentice licenses being sold.

### **Apprentice Licenses:**

The hallmark of the Families Afield program is the apprentice hunting license (also called "mentored" hunting). The creation of an apprentice hunting license allows a new hunter to safely try hunting under the watchful eye of an experienced adult mentor before completing a hunter education class. Mentors instill safety, ethics, and their passion for the sport in new hunters in a safe setting, while allowing the newcomer the thrill of the hunt.

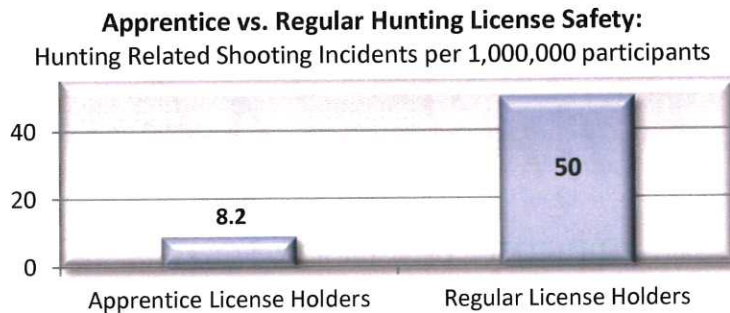
### **Apprentice Hunting Creates New Hunters:**



\* Apprentice Hunting Licenses Buyer Survey data compiled by Mile Creek Communications.

### Apprentice Hunting Is Safe:

The safest hunter in the woods is the supervised youth hunter. In fact, Apprentice hunting has been shown to be more than 6 times safer than the general hunting population.



\* Apprentice Hunting Licenses Survey compiled by Mile Creek Communications.

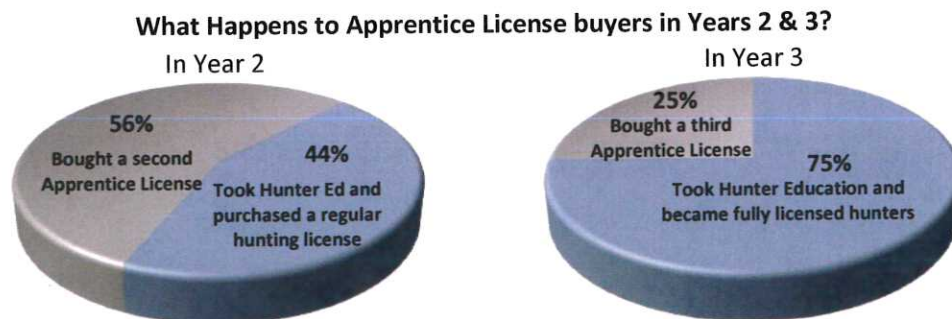
### Apprentice Hunting Retains New Hunters:

Data from Ohio's Apprentice Hunting program shows that roughly half (47-52%) of all apprentice license buyers will be retained as hunting license buyers. This mirrors data from the Pennsylvania Game Commission that shows a 55% retention rate for their mentored program. With a 50% retention rate, Families Afield is not only one of the most successful recruitment programs available, it's also one of the most effective *retention* programs available to state wildlife agencies today.

### Multi-Year Apprentice Licenses Convert More Hunters:

Apprentice hunting allows new hunters to *try* hunting before spending hours in a hunter education class. This "try-before-you-buy" concept allows mentors to instill safety, ethics, and their passion for the sport in new hunters in a safe setting while they get to experience the thrill of the hunt. *It's important to note that a component of each Families Afield bill is the requirement that prior to becoming a fully licensed hunter a newcomer must pass hunter education.*

Additionally, research from the Ohio Division of Wildlife shows that once Apprentice hunters are hooked, they voluntarily transition to becoming a fully licensed hunter by taking Hunter Education before it's required by law.



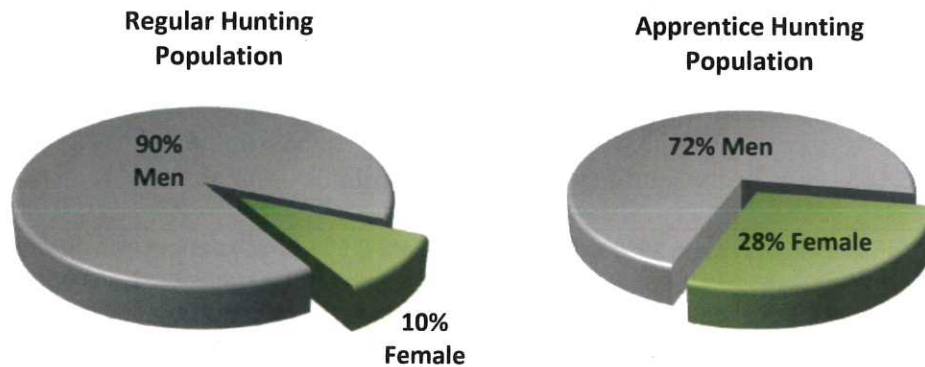
Data Compiled by: Ohio Division of Wildlife

In year two, nearly 1/2 of repeat license buyers (44%) took Hunter Ed when they could have continued to hunt on an apprentice license for two additional years. By year three, it jumps to 75%. This data demonstrates that Apprentice hunters are giving up the remaining years of eligibility for Apprentice licenses and transitioning to Hunter Education and regular hunting licenses.



### Apprentice Licenses Successfully Recruit Females to Hunting:

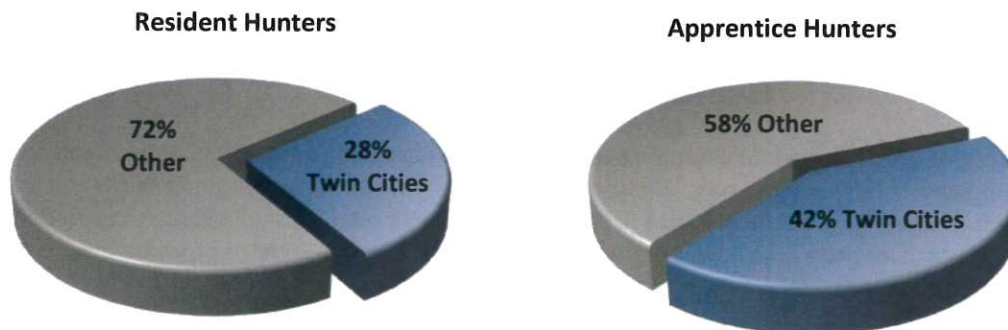
Data from Minnesota details the how Apprentice Licenses do a better job of recruiting females. In that study, nearly 30% of apprentice license buyers were female, a rate 3x greater than the general hunting population.



Data Compiled by: *Minnesota Department of Natural Resources*

### Apprentice Licenses Attract Urban Hunters

The future of hunting in America depends on its ability to attract newcomers from the urban and suburban areas of the country. The growth of metropolitan areas has increased their political clout that it is a growing reality that city dwellers will determine future hunting and firearm laws. Data from Minnesota details the success Families Afield has had in recruiting non-traditional hunters from metropolitan areas. The research showed that 42% of apprentice license buyers came from urban locations. Metropolitan hunters account for just 28% of the general hunting population in the state.



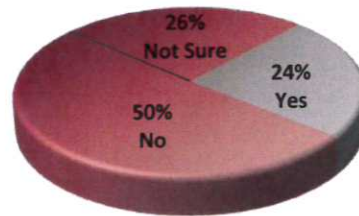
Data Compiled by: *Minnesota Department of Natural Resources*

### Would Apprentice Hunters Participate Anyways?

It is true that some individuals would end up hunting if Apprentice licenses were not available; however the vast majority would not. Research from Minnesota makes it clear that without Apprentice hunting to help recruit new hunters, most of those individuals would have not hunted.

In fact, only 24% of Apprentice Hunters responded they would have hunted without the Apprentice license.

### Would you have hunted if the Apprentice Program did not exist?



Source: Minnesota Department of Natural Resources - Apprentice Hunter Validation Survey

### Mentored Hunting in Wisconsin

Wisconsin became a Families Afield state in 2009 with the passage of AB 672, which permitted a new hunter to try hunting under the supervision of an experienced mentor with the following restrictions: 1) the apprentice hunter must be at least 10 year old; 2) the apprentice and the mentor may possess one hunting implement between them. Over time, the age restriction and the one gun restriction has been proven to be completely unnecessary from a safety perspective, and are likely a disincentive for potential mentors and apprentices.

### Allowing Parents to Decide

The Families Afield coalition supports the elimination of these restrictions because it will remove yet another barrier that prevents the introduction of hunting to the next generation by removing the references to age for mentored hunting permits. This would allow parents to decide when their sons and daughters are ready to begin hunting. Parents, who care for their children far more than the government, are in a much better position to make this judgment.

Forty states, including Michigan trust parents to make this decision. The ten-year old requirement is literally preventing interested newcomers from trying hunting in Wisconsin. In Pennsylvania, more than 17,000, which is 49% of the mentored youth licenses sold are for apprentices under the age of ten. Trusting parents has helped to recruit 1.95 million apprentice hunters, while maintaining such an impressive safety record.

### Removing a Disincentive for Mentors

Only four states out of 40 that have implemented mentored hunting programs restrict the mentor and apprentice to one hunting implement between the two. The remaining thirty-six states allow mentors and parents to decide if the apprentice is ready to begin hunting with a firearm or bow of their own. This unnecessary restriction is a disincentive for potential mentors who have a limited number of days during which they may be able to hunt. It makes them choose between being a mentor and hunting themselves.

### About the Families Afield Program:

Families Afield was established by the *Sportsmen's Alliance*, the *National Shooting Sports Foundation*, and the *National Wild Turkey Federation* in 2004 in an effort to reduce and remove unnecessary barriers that impede the next generation of sportsmen and women from joining our ranks. Along with the *National Rifle Association* and the *Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation*, Families Afield legislation has passed in 40 states resulting in more than 1.95 million apprentice licenses being sold.

For questions, or more information, contact Evan Heusinkveld, president and CEO of the Sportsmen's Alliance – (614) 888-4868 or at [evanh@sportsmensalliance.org](mailto:evanh@sportsmensalliance.org).



## WISCONSIN HUNTER EDUCATION INSTRUCTOR ASSOCIATION

August 2, 2017

Committee on Natural Resources and Sporting Heritage  
Chairman Kleefisch and members Quinn, Tittl, Edming, Nerison, Musau, Skowrowski, Ripp, Tusler, Stafsholt, Milroy, Hesselbein, Spreitzer, Stuck and Brostoff

Re: Opposition to 2017 Assembly Bill 455

The Wisconsin Hunter Education Instructor Association (WHEIA) is a professional organization of hunter education instructors. One of our founding goals is to provide a voice for the over 4000 instructors in the state. The mentoring law that presently exists does take into account safety factors and the serious role of a mentor to provide focused instruction to a mentee when hunting with a firearm.

There is a strong reason why only "one" firearm should be used: **Safety**. The mentor must be 100% solely focused on the actions of the new hunter, youth or adult. Allowing the mentor to carry a second firearm will distract and slow the mentor from their primary responsibility of concentrating on the actions of the new hunter. The mentor's sole responsibility should be on the mentee; they must be able to make split second decisions and be able to react instantly. A new hunter is prone to making judgement errors whether it is because they are carrying a firearm for the first time or because they lack the maturity or experience to make the right decision.

There is no reason that the mentor needs to carry a firearm and have the opportunity to shoot game. This is the time, for a person new to hunting when it's their time and their time only. The vast majority of hunters when mentoring a new hunter are not concerned about bagging their own game, they are there to help guide and enjoy the experience of the hunter they are mentoring.

As instructors, parents, mentors, educators, legislators, we are responsible to pass on skills and knowledge to keep our new hunters and the public safe. This why we have courses and mentoring to pass drivers education. As we all know, many car accidents involving those new to driving are due to the lack of experience. Well, why should this be any different for use of a firearm?

We request that the authors of the legislation work with the Instructor Association, the DNR, and other interested groups to develop practical solutions that consider safety, ethics, and responsibility.

In closing, we ask that you consider our suggestion to work together and recognize our strong opposition to this bill as proposed unless the one firearm regulation remains intact.

Respectfully,

*Wisconsin Hunter Education Instructor Association Officers and Board Members*

CC: George Meyer, Executive Director, Wisconsin Wildlife Federation



Good morning -- my name is Kaleb Hilgemann and I am here today with my dad and brother to testify in support of eliminating the hunting age in Wisconsin.

I love the outdoors and especially hunting and fishing. I am 9 years old but have been hunting with my dad and brother since I was 7. In fact, I harvested my first deer, a 3 point buck, in Virginia when I was 7.

I also enjoy taking my friends, who don't have the opportunity to hunt, into the outdoors to learn about the benefits of hunting and fishing. Last year my dad and I took one of my best friends on his first successful deer hunt. He was 8 years old.

I love hunting and wish I had the opportunity to hunt deer and turkeys with my dad and brother on our farm in Stratford. Unfortunately, the only time I can legally hunt is when we visit our cabin in Virginia, which is 13 hours from our home in Wisconsin.

I am asking you to please support this bill today so that responsible kids like me can pursue their passion for the outdoors and carry on the hunting tradition without having to leave Wisconsin.

Thank you very much.



Good morning - my name is Kohle Hilgemann and I am 11 years old. I am here today to speak in support of this bill to eliminate the hunting age in Wisconsin.

I love the outdoors and especially the opportunity to hunt and fish with my family. I started following my dad into the woods when I was very young. He taught me the importance of responsible management of our resources and why hunting was an important part of maintaining our wildlife. He also taught me firearms safety and always repeats those important lessons anytime we head to the woods.

As with most 11 year olds, I am a busy kid. I play basketball and football and am also a member of the school band. Kids my age have a lot of opportunity to be active, unfortunately that doesn't include hunting until you turn 10 in Wisconsin. By that age, many kids are already too busy with other activities to take up the sport.

I was fortunate to harvest my first deer when I was 9 years old in Virginia. From the moment I walked up on my first deer, a nice 9 point buck, I knew I was hooked for life.

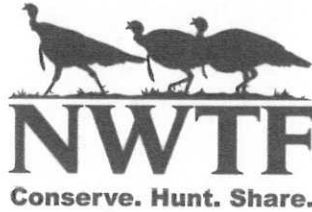
When we moved back to Wisconsin last year, I was excited to hunt deer with my grandpa and dad on our farm. I was disappointed that my little brother, Kaleb, couldn't take part in the hunt as well. It didn't seem right that he wasn't allowed to hunt, even though he had learned how and had safely harvested a deer with me in Virginia.

I am asking you to please support this bill so that kids like me and my brother can continue Wisconsin's hunting and outdoor traditions before we get too involved in other activities to participate.

Thank you very much.







August 01, 2017

Wisconsin Assembly and Senate

Madison, WI 53704

Honorable Senators and Assemblymen,

The Wisconsin State Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation, on behalf of our 20,000 members in the state, would like to go on record supporting AB 455 and SB 362.

- Eliminate the reference to a minimum age for mentored hunters, allow parents to decide at what age their kids are ready to begin hunting.
- Eliminate the restriction that only one firearm or bow may be carried between a mentor and an apprentice hunter.

Mentored hunters in many states do not face these restrictions when trying to get young people involved in hunting. Reaching kids before they become immersed in other activities is critical to the future of hunting. Ultimately parents are in the best position to make these decisions. And safety data proves overwhelmingly that this is an extremely safe method to introducing newcomers to hunting.

Sincerely,

David Burke  
NWTF-WI President  
520 Franklin  
Wausau, WI 54403

National Wild Turkey Federation

P.O. Box 530 • 770 Augusta Road • Edgefield, South Carolina 29824 • Phone: (803) 637-3106 • Fax: (803) 637-0034

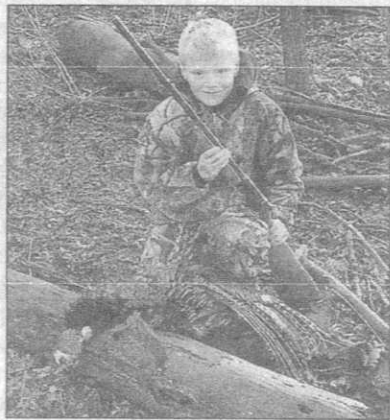
[www.nwtf.org](http://www.nwtf.org)



# Reader Shots



Allie Jo Burns, 9, of Altura, shot this 25-pound gobbler, her first, with a 9½-inch beard and ¾-inch spurs, April 14 near Nodine.



Nolan Arkell, 9, of Lewisville, shot this turkey, with an 8½-inch beard, April 22 in Watonwan County.



Andy Peirskalla, of Avon, harvested this hybrid Merriam's gobbler while hunting April 14 in north central Nebraska with his parents.



Wyatt Larson, 9, of Montrose, shot his first turkey while hunting with his dad in Hennepin County April 15. The bird had a 9¼-inch beard.



Ben Burns, 9, of Winona, shot this 23-pound gobbler, his first, with a 9-inch beard and ¾-inch spurs, April 16 near Nodine.



Tucker Loy, of Oronoco, shot his first tom while hunting April 23 near Pleasant Valley.



Tanner Hoel, 11, of White Bear Lake, shot this 22-pound gobbler, with a 9½-inch beard and 1-inch spurs, April 15.



Andrea Larson, 10, of Montrose, shot her first tom, with a 9¼-inch beard, while hunting April 22 in Wright County with her dad.



Dawson Flug, 6, of Chippewa Falls, shot his 24-pound gobbler, his first, with a 7-inch beard and ¾-inch spurs, while hunting April 15 near Nodine.



McKenna Miller, 11, of Waseca, shot her first turkey April 16 in Waseca County. The bird weighed 22½-pounds and had a 9½-inch beard and 2-inch spurs.



Kyle Bollins, 12, and dad, John Bollins, of Hermantown, pose with Kyle's first turkey shot while hunting April 22 with Harold Bauer near Milaca.



Teagan Vogtlin, 7, of Aitkin, shot his first turkey while hunting April 17 in Aitkin County.



# Reader Shots



Tripp McCann, 8, of Eden Valley, shot this 22-pound gobbler, his first, with a 9-inch beard and 1-inch spurs, April 23 in Meeker County.



Jake Jensen, of Eagan, shot his first turkey April 15 near Motley. The bird had a 9-inch beard.



Tommy Bourgoin III, of White Bear Lake, shot this 22-pound tom, with an 11½-inch beard, April 16 near Bruno.



Erin Bengtson, shot her first turkey while hunting with her dad, Oct. 10 in Sherburne County.



John Restad and his grandson, Marcus Merrill, shot these birds, 18- and 21-pound toms with 9-inch beards, near Rochester April 12.



Jacob Eichers, 12, shot this 22-pound gobbler, his first, with an 8¾-inch beard and 1-inch spurs, April 17 while hunting with Chris C. Biehn in LeSueur County.



Spencer Drill, 9, of Courtland, shot his first turkey, a 15-pound jake, with double 3½-inch beards, while hunting with his dad April 16 near Courtland.



Owen Ihrke, 8, of Eyota, shot his first turkey while hunting April 14 in Olmsted County. The bird weighed 27-pounds and had an 11½-inch beard and 1¼-inch spurs.





**Date: August 2, 2017**

**To: Chairman Kleefisch and Honorable Members of the Wisconsin Assembly Committee on Natural Resources and Sporting Heritage**

**Re: WI AB 455 - Support**

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Dear Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation, I'm writing to express our strong support for Assembly Bill 455, legislation that would remove the minimum age requirement to participate in Wisconsin's mentored hunting program and lift the restriction of one firearm, bow, or crossbow per mentor/apprentice pair.

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) funds 90% of its fish and wildlife management activities through the "user-pays, public-benefits" American System of Conservation Funding – comprised of revenue from hunting and fishing licenses and dedicated federal funds through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration (WSFR) Programs. WSRF revenue is generated through excise taxes on firearms, ammunition, archery equipment, fishing tackle, marine electronics and motor boat fuel. Through these funds and the license dollars provided directly by Wisconsin hunters and anglers, sportsmen and women proudly shoulder the burden of providing the resources necessary for the DNR to carry out its mission of managing the fish and wildlife resources for the people of Wisconsin.

The availability of these state and federal funds for conservation in Wisconsin is directly tied to participation in hunting, fishing and the shooting sports. Since 2015, the DNR's collected revenue has fallen short of their authorized expenditures by \$4 million to \$6 million each year. If the DNR cannot close this gap, the long-term viability of managing the state's fish and wildlife resources for the benefit of all Wisconsinites could be in jeopardy. Furthermore, a decline in hunting participation is a threat to Wisconsin's rich outdoor culture and the very heritage on which the state was founded.

Assembly Bill 455 seeks to help address these concerns by eliminating the requirement that an apprentice hunter be at least 10 years of age to participate in the state's mentored hunting program, thereby significantly expanding opportunities for new hunters to take to the field with their families. It also would allow for the mentor, in addition to the apprentice, to have a firearm, bow, or

crossbow, which would further encourage experienced hunters to serve as mentors and introduce new hunters to the field. This effort, known nationally as Families Afield, seeks to expand hunting opportunities, increase the number of hunters and ensure the future of our hunting heritage.

The apprentice hunting program has been proven a success in Wisconsin, as evidenced by the fact that the DNR issued over 26,000 apprentice hunting licenses in 2016. Apprentice hunting allows outdoor mentors to instill safety, ethics, conservation and their passion for hunting in new hunters without requiring them to spend significant time in a hunter education course before a prospective hunter has had a chance to go hunting. This "try before you buy" approach is the hallmark of Families Afield and has been adopted in 40 states throughout the nation.

While apprentice hunting programs have proven to be extremely successful in recruiting new hunters, the sportsmen's community occasionally hears unfounded concerns about safety. Hunting in general is a very safe activity, with a national incident rate of 50 incidents per million participants. With more than 1.7 million participants in 40 states with apprentice hunting programs, the data is clear – apprentice hunting is extremely safe. In fact, apprentice hunters are more than six times safer than the general hunting population, with an incident rate of 8.2 incidents per million participants. Further, following the new hunter's apprentice period, the recruit would then be required to complete a more formal hunter's safety course before headed afield by him/herself. Therefore, these programs eliminate a potential barrier to participation, while ensuring the hunter is well-educated on the necessary safety protocols. Since the adoption of the Families Afield programs, apprentice hunters have proven to be the safest hunters in the field.

Wisconsin's apprentice hunting program and the improvements proposed in AB 455 offer the DNR means to reach new constituencies in a way that benefits Wisconsin's public wildlife resources, local communities, and cultural heritage. These activities keep public fish and wildlife populations healthy, facilitate habitat management and conservation, generate revenue for public agencies and private businesses, and support jobs. In 2011, hunters spent \$2.5 billion on their outdoor pursuits and supported over 34,000 jobs in the state. Please see the attached Wisconsin Economic Impact Report for more information.

With these factors in mind, I respectfully urge your support and passage of AB 455 as currently written.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Chris Horton".

Chris Horton

Senior Director, Midwestern States  
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation

Attachments:

Wisconsin Economic Impact Report



Wisconsin American System of Conservation Funding Sheet

CC: Governor Scott Walker

Secretary Cathy Stepp



# Wisconsin sportsmen & women

1,554,000 hunters & anglers spent \$4.03 billion in 2011

**SPORTSMEN  
BENEFIT  
THE  
STATE  
ECONOMY**

1.55 million people (resident and non-resident) hunted or fished in Wisconsin in 2011, almost the same as the number of people that live in the Milwaukee-Waukesha-West Allis Metropolitan Area, the state's largest metro area (1.55 million vs. 1.56 million).

There are two times more resident sportsmen and women in Wisconsin than the total home attendance for the Green Bay Packers in 2011 (1.2 million vs. 564,097).

Sportsmen and women spent \$4.03 billion on hunting and fishing in Wisconsin in 2011, almost twice the combined receipts for corn, the state's second highest grossing agricultural commodity that year (\$4.03 billion vs \$2.1 billion).

Hunters and anglers support more jobs in Wisconsin than the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Menard's, and Kohl's Corp. the state's three largest employers (55,722 vs. 29,964).

Sportsmen and women in Wisconsin generated \$377 million in state and local taxes in 2011 - that is enough to support the average salaries of more than 7,200 policemen in the state.

**Every single state makes a contribution.  
Here are the facts on Wisconsin's anglers and hunters.**

SEGMENT	PARTICIPANTS	DAYS	SPENDING	JOBS
Total Sportsmen *	1,554,000	24.5 million	\$4.03 billion	55,722
Total Anglers *	1,246,800	21.3 million	\$1.5 billion	21,542
Total Hunters *	894,500	3.2 million	\$2.5 billion	34,180

\*Data includes both residents and non-residents age 16 and up, and is a snapshot of participation and spending for 2011. Total Sportsmen does not equal the sum of Anglers and Hunters as some individuals both hunt and fish.

**Wisconsin  
Sportsmen & Women  
Support**

Spending per Day  
**\$11 million**

Salaries and Wages  
**\$1.7 billion**

Federal Taxes  
**\$429 million**

State and Local Taxes  
**\$377 million**

Ripple Effect  
**\$6.22 billion**

# AN OUTDOOR NATION

Sportsmen and women spent \$90 billion in 2011, that's more than the combined global sales of Apple's iPhone® and iPad® the same year.



## NATIONAL STATISTICS

PARTICIPANTS	SPENDING	JOBS	SALARIES / WAGES	TOTAL TAXES
<b>Sportsmen:</b> 37.4 million *	\$90.0 billion **	1.5 million	\$61.7 billion	\$26.7 billion
<b>Anglers:</b> 33.1 million	\$47.7 billion	828,000	\$35.3 billion	\$14.9 billion
<b>Hunters:</b> 13.7 million	\$38.3 billion	681,000	\$26.4 billion	\$11.8 billion

## WISCONSIN STATISTICS & NATIONAL RANK

1,554,000 #9	\$4.03 billion #5	55,722 #6	\$1.7 billion #7	\$806 million #6
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\* Total Sportsmen are participants age 16 and up, does not equal the sum of Anglers and Hunters as some individuals both hunt and fish.

\*\* Total angling and hunting expenditures do not add to Total Sportsmen spending due to expenditures not categorized specifically for either pursuit.



Since 1989 the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation (CSF) has maintained a singleness of purpose that has guided the organization to become the most respected and trusted sportsmen's organization in the political arena. CSF's mission is to work with Congress, governors, and state legislatures to protect and advance hunting, angling, recreational shooting, and trapping. The unique and collective force of the Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus (CSC), the Governors Sportsmen's Caucus (GSC) and the National Assembly of Sportsmen's Caucuses (NASC), working closely with CSF, and with the support of major hunting, recreational fishing and shooting, and trapping organizations, serves as an unprecedented network of pro-sportsmen legislators that advance the interests of America's hunters and anglers.

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For more information visit [www.sportsmenslink.org](http://www.sportsmenslink.org) or call Sara Leonard at 202-543-6850 x11.

Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation 110 North Carolina Avenue, SE Washington, DC 20003

Sources: Hunting in America: An Economic Force for Conservation, National Shooting Sports Foundation; Fishing in America: An Economic Force for Conservation, American Sportfishing Association; 2011 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife Associated Recreation, US Fish & Wildlife Service. Specific sources for state comparisons available on request, 202-543-6850.



# Wisconsin

## Contributions to the American System of Conservation Funding

Through the American System of Conservation Funding (comprised of revenue from sporting licenses and Pittman-Robertson and Dingell-Johnson/Wallop-Breaux funds), sportsmen and women contribute billions of dollars to conservation. The System is a “user-pays, public-benefits” model, wherein sportsmen and women provide the vast majority of the funding for state fish and wildlife agencies – the primary stewards of our nation’s fish and wildlife resources. The revenue generated through this System helps to conserve fish and wildlife, provide clean water and healthy landscapes, and maintain access to these resources for the public at large, not just hunters and anglers.

	Hunting Licenses	Fishing Licenses	Pittman-Robertson	Dingell-Johnson/Wallop-Breaux	Total
2015 Funding	\$37.71 M	\$30.26 M	\$24.89 M	\$11.59 M	\$104.45 M
2015 National Rankings	3	6	7	3	3
Historical Funding Total	\$1.11 B	\$899.11 M	\$284.79 M	\$278.59 M	\$2.57 B
Historical Funding US Rank	3	3	6	6	3

### Wisconsin sportsmen and women’s contributions to the American System of Conservation Funding:

- Wisconsin has built and maintained over 2,000 fishing and boating access sites.
- Wisconsin has 200 Wildlife Management Areas averaging about 3,000 acres in size, which creates almost 600,000 acres of public hunting area.
- The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources manages 12 hatcheries, egg collection facilities and rearing stations that stock millions of fish every year into waters across the state to enhance recreational angling.
- In the recently published Wisconsin DNR Biennial Research Agenda, there were a total of 46 research projects across 23 priority focus areas to manage wildlife strategically and specifically.
- Wisconsin’s current Black Bear Population Monitoring Program is investing ASCF dollars in 2 research projects.

This report is made possible thanks to:

**2015 Certified Paid License Holders**  
 Fishing: 1,404,177  
 Hunting: 717,381

**2015 Total Licenses/Permits/Tags**  
 Fishing: 1,731,231  
 Hunting: 2,968,341





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MEMO

August 2, 2017

To: Members of Assembly Committee on Natural Resources and Sporting Heritage and Senate Committee on Sporting Heritage

**The Wisconsin Hunters Rights Coalition (HRC) would like to go on record as strongly supporting AB 455 and SB 362**

These bills make 2 needed changes to Wisconsin's successful mentored hunting program. The first would allow parents to decide at what age a young person is ready to become an apprenticed hunter. Currently 34 states allow this to happen. Statistics show that an apprentice hunter – while hunting with a mentor – is the safest hunter in the woods. In fact – 5 times safer!

It just makes sense. Parents know their children better than any instructor or state official. We know that there is no safety reason to deny parents this choice. And we also know that in Pennsylvania, for example, almost half the mentored youth licenses sold are to those under the age of 10.

The second change would allow the mentor to decide if there will be one or two weapons used in the hunt. Currently only 4 restrict mentor/apprentice to only one weapon between the mentor and the apprentice.

This change is needed to encourage more mentoring. Many hunters can only hunt a day or two each season. In order to inspire them to be a mentor, sometimes it is important that they are also able to harvest game. While providing the experience to the apprentice remains the primary objective, there is no safety reason to deny the mentor the chance to also participate in the hunt. Remember that many apprentices are adults, so the idea that it is always best to stick to just one weapon is not always true.

Statistics from our own DNR show that the lack of having a mentor to go with is one of the biggest impediments for beginning hunters. AB 455 and SB 362 are needed if we are going to see our sporting heritage preserved for the generations to come.

The Hunters Rights Coalition is Wisconsin's only group 100% dedicated to advancing hunting opportunities and protecting the rights of Wisconsin's hunters.

The HRC members endorsing this bill include the Wisconsin Bear Hunters Association, Wisconsin Firearms Owners, many Wisconsin Chapters of Safari Club International, and Whitetails of Wisconsin.



8/1/2017

Re: Proposed AB 455. Mentoring Bill

In Opposition.

My name is: Kevyn Quamme, W6970 County Hwy B, Dalton, WI 53926

I am an active Hunters Ed instructor, Firearms Coach and trainer, active with Hunter mentoring programs, and youth firearms events. I also am a member of many conservation groups, including the Dane County Conservation League, and the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation.

I oppose moving ahead with this bill, without changes to these 2 items.

The attempt to remove the age limit and requirement for 1 firearm or bow between the inexperienced hunter and the mentor should not be allowed. In an earlier public hearing on a similar bill, the thought was an age of 7 or 8 was about the limit where a child has the abilities to properly harvest an animal, mentally, physically, shooting ability, and the understanding of wildlife management and death. Earlier than that, it can be an almost traumatic experience.

With any youth training and firearms, we always start with a dedicated trainer for each participant handling a firearm. One on One instruction. Complete focus on where the firearm is pointed, the status of the firearm and any possibility of engaging the trigger before being on target is critical to safety. Most hunting accidents are attributed to firearm handling within a group of hunters, injuring themselves or a hunting partner while walking together or in a small group.

Having worked with hundreds of young shooters and their parents, I know from firsthand experience that there is a wide variety of ability and judgement in individuals. Attention, maturity and physical ability's range widely in shooters of the same age, and parents judgement and focus on safety varies widely also. Many parents misjudge their child's ability's and sometimes assign them abilities they do not possess, and in some cases restrict them by not recognizing their abilities. As parents, consider your own experience with raising children, and how many resist parental direction, but take it easily from another adult. Not being totally focused on the activity can reduce the attention to safety.

If this Bill is allowed to proceed, Please maintain the single firearm between hunter and mentor, and set a reasonable minimum age for the youth hunters.

Respectfully Submitted

Kevyn Quamme (608) 209-3842

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Quamme', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

