

JERRY PETROWSKI

WISCONSIN STATE SENATOR

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 611 Mentoring Hunter Safety October 19, 2021

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, for hearing testimony today on Senate Bill 611, legislation that would allow in-the-field mentoring to fulfill the hunter's safety requirement for a license. I appreciate your taking up this bill and considering the components of the Sporting Freedom package.

Our sporting heritage in Wisconsin is one of our greatest assets. The passing down of the sport and tradition of hunting from one generation to the next – those shared learning experiences between family members, friends, and mentors – is important to the education and safety training of those who want to hunt.

This bill is one more option for the preservation of our sporting heritage. Currently, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) offers hunters safety courses which require the individual to complete an online instruction course followed by in-person field testing. This bill, however, would also allow the field testing requirement to be satisfied if the person participates in a mentored hunt.

A mentored hunt is defined in Wisconsin State Statutes 29.592 and the requirements of a mentor include:

- They must be 18 years of age or older
- They are the parent or guardian -- or have their authorization -- of the person for whom they are mentoring (this does not apply if the mentee is over 18 years of age)
- They remain within arm's reach of the person they are mentoring
- They have a hunters safety training certification (or have been exempted from that requirement) and hold a valid hunting license

We have seen that mentoring is one of the best ways in which to fuel interest in enjoying the great outdoors. This hands-on alternative allows for the teaching of lifelong skills and the direct application of the materials they learned during the online training course.

Again, thank you for your time and consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions

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ROBERT BROOKS

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 60TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Hearing Testimony

Senate Committee on Sporting Heritage, Small Business, and Rural Issues

Tuesday, October 19, 2021

10:00 A.M.

Wisconsin State Capitol, North Hearing Room

Chairman Stafsholt and members of the Senate Committee on Sporting Heritage and Rural Issues, thank you for affording me with the opportunity to testify in favor of Senate Bill 611.

Like many of you, I believe our sporting heritage is one of Wisconsin's greatest assets. The passing down of the sport and tradition of hunting from one generation to the next—those shared learning experiences between family members, friends, and mentors—is important to the education and safety training of those who desire to hunt.

Senate Bill 611 is one more option for the preservation of Wisconsin's sporting heritage. At this writing, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources offers hunter safety courses requiring individuals to complete online instruction followed by an in-person field test. This bill would allow the field testing requirement to be satisfied if the individual participates in a mentored hunt. According to Wis. Stat. 29.592, to participate in a mentored hunt, one must:

- Be at least eighteen years of age
- Be the parent or guardian of the individual for whom they are mentoring—if the individual is younger than eighteen
- Remain within arm's reach of the individual they are mentoring
- Have a hunters safety training certification and hold a valid hunting license

We have seen that mentoring is one of the best ways in which to fuel interest in enjoying the out-of-doors. This hands-on alternative allows for the teaching of lifelong skills and the direct application of concepts learned during the online course.

Quite simply, Senate Bill 611 would allow an individual to satisfy the in-person field testing requirement for the hunter's safety program by participating in a mentored hunt. Mentored hunting is a great way for kids to safely learn the art of hunting and preserve the legacy of our sporting freedom.

I am happy to answer any questions you might have.



Testimony in support of Senate Bill 611 – allowing mentored hunts to satisfy field day requirement

In 2020 the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources decided to no longer allow in-person hunter education courses due to Governor Tony Evers' COVID-19 restrictions, this included the required "field day" that is necessary, in addition to passing an online course, to legally hunt in WI. This decision, had it not been challenged, would have prevented access to hunting, for a countless number of prospective first-time hunters looking to carry on our state's long-heralded hunting heritage.

The pandemic showed just how vulnerable our system of recruiting new hunters is. A Governor's edict and a complacent state fish and game agency can basically stop an entire class of new hunters from legally purchasing a hunting license – something that is protected by the WI State Constitution. Fortunately, there is a legal work around that was even identified by the WI DNR during Governor Evers' COVID statewide shutdown. Mentored hunting.

Thanks to the leadership of the Wisconsin legislature, in 2009 they created a provision to allow a person who has not taken hunter safety to hunt, provided they are with a mentor. The mentee must be accompanied by a licensed hunter (mentor), hunt within arm's reach of the mentor and follow other rules. Such mentored hunts remove barriers to hunting yet still allow people to safely experience hunting in a highly-controlled manner. This one-on-one mentoring opportunity gives first-time hunters a chance to try hunting and enables veteran hunters to pass on their passion for the outdoors and help keep Wisconsin's hunting heritage strong.

To be a mentor, an individual must:

1. Be age 18 or older.
2. Be the mentee's parent or guardian or has the permission of the mentee's parent or guardian. This does not apply if the mentee is age 18 or older.
3. Have completed a required hunter education course or is otherwise exempt* from the hunter education requirement.
4. Have any valid, non-expired Wisconsin hunting approval, regardless of the type of game pursued by the mentee.
5. Remain within arm's reach of the mentee.
6. Ensure compliance with all other hunting laws, including season, bag limit and weapon regulations. If also hunting and/or attempting to harvest game while mentoring, has all required hunting approvals for the applicable season (license, permit, tag, etc).
7. Only serve as a mentor for one mentee at a time.



WISCONSIN HUNTER EDUCATION INSTRUCTOR ASSOCIATION

www.wheia.com/contact-wheia

Good morning Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee. My name is Gary Dieck. I am on the Board of Directors of the Wisconsin Hunter Education Instructor Assoc. often just called WHEIA for short.

You are going to have many speakers here today to give their reasons why to vote against SB611. To save time I have a short statement to present:

I have been a hunter education instructor for over 26 years. Being from a rural community there always is a greater share of my students that come from a single parent family. For that reason I am a stickler that each of my students receive as much "hands on training" as possible. The results of this are hard to measure but I can say one thing for sure.

There has never been one of my students listed on the yearly Hunting Incident report.

Thank You for your time. Any question?

Gary Dieck
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Wonewoc, WI 53968
608-464-3290



Senate Committee on Sporting Heritage, Small Business, and Rural Issues

2021 Senate Bill 611

Satisfying the Hunter Education Field Testing Requirement with a Mentored Hunt October 19, 2021

Good morning Chair Stafsholt and members of the Committee. My name is Jon King, and I am the Hunter Education Administrator for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. Thank you for the opportunity to testify, for informational purposes, on Senate Bill 611 (SB 611), related to hunter education requirements.

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Division of Public Safety and Resource Protection has offered hunter education for 55 years. Hunter education started as a grassroots movement to provide a lifetime of experience to a beginning hunter and that is the fundamental desire of education. In the past 55 years, over 1,250,000 hunters have completed a Wisconsin hunter education course. On behalf of the department, I would like to thank the thousands of experienced instructors who have shared their time, energy, and passion for hunting to ensure that future hunters could learn the appropriate safety, conservation, and ethical considerations involved in hunting.

Under current law, anyone born on or after January 1, 1973 must complete a hunter education course in order to purchase a hunting license in Wisconsin. There are limited exceptions to this requirement for military personnel and hunters participating in a mentored hunt with a hunter who has already completed the required course.

Currently there are three ways to complete the hunter education requirement:

1. Traditional Class: Complete in your home community over a few nights with a certified instructor group.
2. Internet Field Day: Complete online study at home and then attend a one-day, in-person field day with a certified instructor group.
3. All Online: Complete online study at home with no in-person field day requirement. Under current COVID-19 precautions, a person of any age may complete this course.

SB 611 would expand these options by allowing a prospective hunter to complete a mentored hunt that complies with the requirements of s. 29.592 in place of the in-person field day.

A mentored hunt involves an adult mentor assisting a person of any age who has not completed a required hunter education course. The mentor must be 18 years of age or older and have completed a hunter education course or be otherwise exempt from the requirement. If the mentee is under 18, the mentor must be the parent or guardian, or have the permission of the parent or guardian to assist the mentee.

Mentored hunting—in the most basic sense of the term—is nothing new, it has been around as long as hunting has. While statutory mentored hunting under s. 29.592 provides one key safety measure, which ensures the mentored hunt is properly supervised by an adult, it does not require a structured educational component. The current hunter education field day requires a certified hunter education instructor to follow a course curriculum that requires the students to physically demonstrate specific actions and verbally explain their understanding of safe firearm handling techniques. Certified hunter education instructors must complete regular certification requirements to ensure they are using the most current techniques and sharing the most relevant information with the students.

Trends in hunting incidents and deaths have been tracked over time. From 1956 to 1966, the Division of Public Safety and Resource Protection investigated 174 hunting incidents including 17 deaths per year. Hunter education began in 1967 and due to the work of over 17,000 hunter education volunteer instructors, hunter education has produced a reduction to 21 hunting incidents with an average of 1.8 deaths per year. Volunteer instructors throughout the state, covering every county, offer over 650 hunter education courses annually. These instructors offer insight, from decades of hands-on experience, with the individuals who complete these courses. Since the onset of the pandemic, the department has nearly doubled the number of internet field days offered to the public, from 127 in 2019 to 247 in 2021.

The department suggests considering the inclusion of requirements for the mentor to be certified as a hunter education instructor and for a structured educational component to be included in a mentored hunt. It is unknown how the proposed legislation would impact student participation in the existing hunter education field days, or the hunting incident rate in the future.

On behalf of the Department of Natural Resources, we would like to thank you for your time today. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

10-19-2021

TESTIMONY OPPOSING SENATE BILL 611

Re: Proposed SB 611 – Satisfying hunter education requirement with a mentored hunt

In Opposition

My name is: John J. Plenke, N103W14992 Windsong Cir. E, Germantown, WI 53022

Hunter Safety Education continues to remain a fixture in Wisconsin. The hunting and non-hunting public have a high expectation that hunters of any age, practice safe gun handling while out hunting or at the shooting range.

My Background:

I am a retired DNR Conservation Warden with over 31 years of state service. Over 18 of those years serving as a trainer/mentor of more than 700 volunteer instructors in 8 Southeast counties. I have also been teaching hunter education to Wisconsin residents for over 42 years.

As a public servant to the state I strived to put my best foot forward every day and provide the best *information and training to the public and to the volunteers as I possibly could*. These uncompensated men and women continually dedicate their personal time, knowing that what they do impacts so many Wisconsin citizens by allowing us to continue the rich hunting heritage we have grown so accustomed to.

Let me take a minute to fill you in on some important information.

When a student enters a Wisconsin hunter safety classroom here is a snapshot of what they get for their \$10 fee:

- 1) Well trained, well equipped and certified DNR hunter safety instructors who focus their attention on *delivering a curriculum based on the four basic rules of Firearms Safety*. TAB-k
- 2) A concise and consistent program from north to south that actively engages students in “hands-on” lessons on how to safely carry a gun, how to load and unload a gun utilizing “dummy” ammunition, how to know when it is safe to shoot when hunting with a group, how to work various types of actions, how to safely climb in and out of a tree stand, and more.
- 3) Muzzle control is stressed from start to finish.
- 4) Utilizing these “hands-on” methods retention of material is accomplished
- 5) Instructors that certify these students know that they have successfully demonstrated competency in safe firearms handling principles.

What do you get from the mentor?

Here is a general observation from many years of practical experience and from being a parent myself.

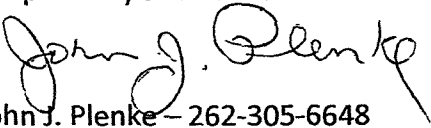
Many parents, and other family members are not knowledgeable enough, in certain educational venues, hunter education included, to pass on the necessary skills and tasks needed to start a young hunter off on the right foot. The vast majority want an outside family member to train their sons or daughters as listening improves greatly with someone they do not know.

A consistent safety message that we have worked on perfecting for over 50 years stands to be lost if this bill is passed.

We cannot and should not ever put convenience ahead of the overall safety of the hunting and non-hunting citizens of our state.

Thank you for giving me an opportunity to speak to you today.

Respectfully submitted.


John J. Plenke - 262-305-6648

Date: October 17, 2021

To: Committee on Sporting Heritage

Subject: Opposition to Senate Bill 611...Relating to: satisfying the hunter education field testing requirement with a mentored hunt

I have been a Wisconsin DNR Volunteer Hunter Safety Instructor for the past 43 years, organized and coached Campbellsport High School Trap Shooting, serve as a member of several nonprofit conservation organizations dedicated to natural resource preservation and education through youth & community involvement, and have mentored several youth and adults in various species hunting and shooting of firearms.

I am in total opposition to Senate Bill 611 moving forward.

The WDNR, with assistance from state hunter safety instructors have organized a format of Hands on Training in the hunter safety program which has proven to be a very effective, practical and a proven means of instructing students. It is truly my opinion this format of student training has no substitute. I believe it is misguided to purport that a mentored hunt can provide the same quality of hands-on training as the hunter education program. I am very prideful and privileged of being involved in the same perspective of instructors throughout the state in bringing the number of hunting-related accidents down dramatically over the years to around 20 in 2020. There is no substitute for public safety and eliminating a proven means of hunter safety training has no exception.

My concern with the proposed mentored hunt option in Senate Bill 611, which would allow an individual to satisfy the in-person field testing requirement of the hunter's safety program, is primarily in trying to determine how competent the proposed mentor is and secondly if he or she is capable of conducting a comparable procedure to what is currently in place.

I am sure there are some competent individuals capable to mentor, but are they capable of fulfilling what is currently offered in hunter safety education? I have also witnessed some individuals who would definitely not provide proper training based on their bad habits and ignoring a positive perspective of providing an important resource in training a young person, based on their individual actions ignoring safe procedures.

The means in which the WDNR certifies hunter safety instructors to train and teach is based on a structured and well-planned procedure, which includes all the necessary training equipment. Hands-on training is a vital part of this procedure. Having worked with a wide variety of students ranging in several different means of capabilities, it is important to understand the student's ability and train accordingly. Many parents and guardians misjudge their children's abilities and allow them to proceed in a direction they are not ready for.

Some major concerns I have with this proposed bill is first of all, how will it be determined if the proposed mentor is capable of properly training the child? Second, how will it be known if the training was even done, let alone in a proper format to ensure proper safety to the student and addressing public safety in general?

Please consider the concerns I have expressed based on many years of striving for the best interest of the student, their families and anyone coming in contact with them. This is a commitment none of the hunter safety instructors take lightly and will fight to maintain.

Respectfully submitted by



Rick Heisler

303 North Elm Street PO Box 341 Campbellsport WI 53010
Certified Wisconsin Hunter Safety Instructor
Campbellsport Hunter Safety Lead Instructor
Wisconsin Hunter Safety Coalition Member

Statement and registration in opposition to 2021 Senate Bill 661

by Thomas Thoresen, October 19, 2021

Dear Senator Stafsholt, Chairman and Members of the Senate Sporting Heritage, Small Business and Rural Issues Committee,

Preserving, protecting and enhancing our rich Wisconsin Hunting Heritage and helping to make hunting a safer, science based, sustainable and a strongly supported public recreational pursuit is something I've been dedicated to nearly my whole life, just like many other dedicated conservationists, especially our thousands of dedicated volunteer WI Hunter Education Instructors past and present. I'm **registering against SB 611** and providing this statement of **opposition in strongest terms** because it clearly goes against what has worked to build support for our Hunting Heritage in terms of both safety and broad public support.

Here is a short summary of the key points I'd like to bring to your attention and consideration on SB 611:

- Wisconsin has long and rich Hunting Heritage, thanks in part to many dedicated conservationist and volunteer instructors who helped make it better. Proud to have been a part of this pursuit in excellence.
- Wisconsin has long been a leader in Hunter Safety. "Hands on" Hunter Education training helps strengthen the needed understanding to be a safe, ethical hunter that the public will and does support.
- On-line only or mentoring by a less than a certified instructor is not what most parents, other hunters or the public wants. Most parents want a traditional or on-line with field hands on training and testing.
- Mentoring is good to promote hunting, but it in no way is a substitute for training by certified instructors. Allowing mentoring for certified training creates a questions and problems for certification.
- Wisconsin's natural resources belong to all of us. We have well established, good government public input processes for open, transparency in government. This should be utilized and free from special outside interests with money.
- Hunting is supported by the public as an important management tool. It depends on the support of the non-hunters. Divisive development of hunting policy from outside groups does not sit well with most Wisconsinites. Solutions should be sought by open, problem-solving techniques instead of increasing divides among hunters and non-hunters.
- SB 611 negatively impacts our dedicated instructors, hunting clubs and future support for hunting. Please do not advance this bad bill, pushed by an out of state special interest.

As some personal Wisconsin Hunting Heritage background. My mother's grandparents were Prussian immigrants coming to Wisconsin during the middle of the Civil War in 1863. They set up a homestead near Neshkoro WI. My grandfather, Stanislaus(Steve) Zelinske was their youngest child being born in 1884. My grandfather farmed, then became a barber in Redgranite, WI and also lived off the land

hunting , fishing and trapping. There was no question that my mom and her siblings would also be lovers of hunting, fishing and enjoying our beautiful Wisconsin natural resources. My mom's older brother, Walter Zelinske who was initially a school teacher, became a Wisconsin Conservation Warden in 1934. In 1942, like many of "The Greatest Generation" while exempt from the draft due to his law enforcement position, he "volunteered to be drafted" into the Army, became an Army officer as a one of the "90 Day Wonders" and served in both the European theatre and in the Korean War. In 1953 he became Deputy Chief Conservation Warden and Chief Warden in 1963. It was during his tenure in 1967, that Wisconsin's Hunter Safety Education Program was formalized by the legislature and administered in the Conservation Department/DNR. The need for the Hunter Safety Program was unquestionable. There were hundreds of accidents each year, conservation wardens investigated these which showed many should have been preventable.

It was in the mid-1960's that I as a young boy, began to hunt with my family. There was no substitute for safety in my family, this was not the case with some of my high school friends whom I later refused to hunt with for safety reasons. One of my fondest Hunting Heritage memories was in 1972 when I was senior in high school and at age 17 picked up my now **88 year old** grandfather Steve Zelinske **to take him out deer hunting!** We both grinned ear to ear at the experience and it made both of us so happy! I continued to hunt and fish an incredible amount of time while in college going to UW and working in the State Assembly Chief Clerk's and Sergeant's Offices. While working in the Assembly 1975-1979, I saw how Wisconsin Government, was good government. Open and transparent. While working and also going to school, I took the conservation warden civil service in 1978 and did well but not well enough to be in the top group. In 1979, I scored #3 on the civil service test and DNR was hiring 10 new conservation wardens. I got hired as a conservation warden in July, 1979 and went through the State Patrol Law Enforcement training certification for Wisconsin Law Enforcement Officers and then a DNR field training program. I will never forget the training that was given to me and my fellow new conservation wardens at Wisconsin Rapids in October of that year. The Conservation Warden who was the Hunter Education Administrator and the six conservation wardens who were the DNR District Law Enforcement Safety Specialist presented us an incredible overview of the Hunter Education Program, how to be instructors, how important the dedicated, certified volunteer instructors are, how to do background checks to make sure people wanting to be instructors were good citizen representatives. There was however several other things that really stood out at that training. First, the LE safety specialists presented slide after slide of both fatal and non-fatal hunting accidents and how preventable they were by not following one of the three(now four) rules of firearm safety. Second, the LE Safety Specialist hard work also showed investigations done along with field conservation wardens, of accidents were victims during deer gun seen were wearing solid or patterned red clothing which was then legal, could have been prevented if the victims had been wearing blaze orange. That under various low light conditions, blaze orange would have saved lives as they may have been seen. Their hard investigative work documenting these cases led the legislature to adopt starting in 1980 the requirement for hunters(except waterfowl hunters) to wearing blaze orange during the deer gun seasons. The other thing these instructors had us do was do real hunting accident investigations (recreated with actors) so that real life experience of collecting evidence, documenting ballistics, angles, interviewing witnesses, shifting through and taking statements, being critiqued gave already "hands on" experience when the real accidents happened.

As a field conservation warden in Racine County in the early 1980's I did several hunting accident investigations. I also went to dozens, upon dozens of Hunter Education classes taught by our dedicated, certified volunteer Hunter Education Instructors. I was there to usually to give the hunting laws and ethics portion of the class and present an overview of conservation law enforcement. It was working with these certified volunteers that you really got to know how dedicated these instructors were to both the safety and to better our Hunting Heritage. Knowing how important all the DNR Safety Classes were, including Hunter Education and the chance to work with and train many of the local police departments and Sheriff Department boating and snowmobile patrols, I promoted to the Southeast District Law Enforcement Safety Specialists position in 1984. It was also during this time at the urging of hunters to make their sport safer and seeing the already dropping numbers in accidents due to training, Wisconsin followed the State of Colorado's lead to make Hunter Education and training mandatory for persons born after January 1, 1973. Sadly, I remember being called in December of that year by the Waukesha County Sheriff's Department and our local conservation warden to investigate what appeared to be a self-inflicted fatal hunting accident by a 12 year old boy who had been hunting with a 16 year old. Heartbreakingly, the investigation showed the 12 year old had a shotgun with a defective safety, and that he hadn't been properly trained and didn't follow one of the main safety rules of controlling the muzzle of the firearm. This young man would be 49 today if he hadn't made that literally fatal mistake of not controlling the muzzle of his firearm and keeping it in a safe direction. Education and training do matter. So does following that training.

It was also about this time that the State's Hunter Education Administrator, Conservation Warden Homer Moe began utilizing Professor Robert Jackson of UW to help train Hunter Education Instructors and help some Instructors be lead instructors(Master Instructors). A key component was to assure that instead of just reading the Hunter Education manual, or watching a movie "Sweet Sunday Gone" the move was to starting to move to much more "hands on" training. I remember Dr Jackson advising instructors about educating people and learning, "Tell me and I will forget, show me and I will remember, but if you involve me, I will understand". This was an important step in successful training of new hunters. Involving them. Wisconsin was leading the nation in both training of new hunters and in seeing the successful drop in hunting accidents. This training evolved into what now since 2007 has been called the "EDOC" method of teaching used in field training and testing. "EDOC" instruction stand for "Educate". "Demonstrate", "Observe"(the student doing the activity) and "Congratulate".

While promoting/transferring to an Environmental Conservation Warden(new position created) in 1985 and in 1988 to the Madison Area Supervisor (now Lieutenant) I stayed in contact with the Hunter Education program. In 1989, I promoted to the Deputy Division Administrator of the DNR Enforcement Division position under Administrator George Meyer and Secretary CD "Buzz" Besadny. The DNR Law Enforcement Program was one of the programs that reported to us and there was a concerted effort to promote outdoor safety and increase fishing and hunting participation. In the early 1990's Dr. Thomas Haberlein, UW Professor of Rural Sociology had correctly predicted on both demographic data and sociological data that the numbers of hunters and participation rates would decrease in Wisconsin(and nationally)in the future especially with the aging "baby boomer" population. There was a concerted effort to recruit new hunters and fishers. About this time, Dr. Christine Thomas at UW Stevens Point had recently been researching and studying the barriers and ways to get women(half the population) into the outdoors and started the "Becoming an Outdoors Woman" Program. We knew mentoring programs were important in the future but we also knew they were no substitute for hands on safety

and ethics training. In August 1995, Governor Tommy Thompson and the DNR hosted in Green Bay "The Governor's Symposium on North American Hunting Heritage". I mention this because there were many important messages and lessons that had already been established in the Hunter Education program to safely, sustainably and ethically hunt. Related to legislation you are hearing today, there are lessons being ignored. The North American Wildlife model is what we use. Some key principles are that all wildlife belongs to the public. Not hunters, not anti-hunters, not individuals or groups, all of us. Most hunting is supported by the public as it is an important wildlife management tool to control wild animal populations, disease and vehicle accidents. In addition to managing a healthy, sustainable resource, hunting is a huge recreation and economic boost to our economy. Again, reinforced at the symposium and understood by hunters that the support of their recreation depends on the majority of population that are non-hunters. That is why hunters must be inclusive, they need to be role models of ethics, stewardship and safety. The slob hunter or hunter that doesn't show respect for others or wildlife threatens other hunters. So does the hunters whose actions divide themselves or the public.

In 1995 with the DNR reorganization at that time I ended up taking on several positions and duties at the same time, all while continuing to keep my law enforcement credentials. I stayed on as the Deputy Division Administrator for the Division of Enforcement and Science and I was the Section Chief of the Law Enforcement Safety Programs which included the Hunter Education Program. It was especially rewarding at this time to see the incredible cadre of over 4,000 volunteer Hunter Education instructors whose efforts had and were continuing to make a huge difference in reducing accidents and putting safe, ethical hunters in the field. In 2002 I took the Deputy Chief Conservation Warden position which I held until I retired in 2005 with over 30 years of State service. I have long been a proponent of good, clean transparent government like I saw first hand in the Wisconsin Legislature in the 1970's. In retirement, I have continued to be an active Hunter Education Instructor and a promoter of good, clean government. Knowing the importance of excellent, "hands on"- EDOC Training, was one of the reasons why I, and other dedicated instructors thought it important to introduce the question of a requiring "hands on" training for those under 18 at the 2021 Spring Conservation Congress Hearing which was supported and passed overwhelming in 29 counties. I didn't want families to experience the pain of a fatal hunting accident that I had seen prior to mandatory training in 1985 nor see the support for our Hunting Heritage go down because the public did not have confidence in a system where young people were out hunting but not trained by certified, knowledgeable instructors. This is a bad bill that will negatively affect safety and support for hunting. Especially with it's divisiveness.

Thank You. I knew since I couldn't be there in person at the Hearing on 10/19/21, I would write a longer, more detailed insight on the issue of protecting our Hunting Heritage. I guess I also wanted to document my involvement with the Hunting Heritage issues over the years and appreciate that if you read this far. I will go back and just put in a few key summary points at the beginning as it applies to this bill.

Thomas Thoresen



Retired Deputy Chief Conservation Warden, Wisconsin Hunter Education Instructor since 1979

5874 Persimmon Drive, Fitchburg, WI



Good morning and thank you for hearing my testimony. My name is Chris Vaughan and I am here to voice my support for the Wisconsin Sporting Freedom Act.

Hunter Nation is the only organization speaking as a united voice for the outdoor community. These bills were not written solely for hunters and fishermen though. The conservation efforts and effects of these bills will be realized by all those who enjoy our incredible Wisconsin resources.

The Wisconsin Sporting Freedom Act address' obstacles, constitutionally protected rights, outdated and unjustified policies that challenge new and existing outdoor men and women from participating in our God given right to the outdoors.

The issues addressed include

- Pheasants
- Turkeys
- Brook Trout
- Youth Engagement
- Canine Training
- Aquatic Partnerships
- Increased Hunt Opportunity
- Streamlined License and Season Management Process
- Public Lands & Habitat Transparency
- Farming Regulations
- Constitutionally Protected Rights

I am one of the 5,852,490 Public Land Owners here in Wisconsin and know that without addressing and updating our conservation & resource programs, our rights are directly in the crossfire of those that believe we do not have the right to our outdoor heritage.

Wisconsin has the opportunity to be an example and set the standard for other states as a leader in outdoor rights, conservation and habitat management. Our wildlife population, their habitat and the residents of Wisconsin deserve your attention and action.

Please act on these bills and vote YES for conservation, our wildlife resources and The Wisconsin Sporting Freedom Act.

Cole Timmler
Hunter Nation Testimonial

DNR Regulation Simplification Bill

The DNR regulation simplification bill is a necessary bill that would allow for more hunters to get out and hunt. Right now, Wisconsin's hunters are faced with a litany of burdensome regulations that make hunting way more difficult than what it should be. This simplification bill would hope to counter that strenuous process.

Just recently the 2021 Wisconsin Hunting Regulation booklet came out for the fall of 2021 to the spring of 2022. Inside of it is over 30 pages full of Wisconsin hunting regulations that takes the average person over a day to read. And this is only a simplification of the hunting manual that came out this year. Just to read through five pages of the simplified deer hunting regulations takes over two hours to read, and to memorize it all the first time is likely impossible.

Hunters don't want to have to read and study pages of rules every year before they go out and hunt. And it seems like every year there is some sort of new restriction or regulation that the DNR changes. Nobody wants to kill an animal and find out that it wasn't legal to do so because of a new change in regulations. There shouldn't be a fear brought into a legal hunter when a DNR warden walks up to them and asks how they're doing. The simplification is a necessary step towards eliminating this fear in new and experienced hunters.

The DNR Simplification Bill would allow for:

- The removal of unnecessary outdated rules
- Limiting the creation of new hindering regulations
- Simplifying the regulations put on hunters in Wisconsin
- And getting hunters out into the outdoors

That should be the main goal of the DNR when it comes to hunting. Which is to get more and more people to become experienced recurring hunters. Its goal should not be to kill off one of Wisconsin's sources of economy, tradition, and outdoor activities. Getting out into nature is one of the greatest gifts in life that we are given, and to restrict and falsely regulate that God-given gift is something the DNR should never ever stand for.

October 19, 2021

Chairperson Senator Rob Stafsholt, Senator Petrowski, Senator Jagler, Senator Smith, Senator Wirsch
Sporting Heritage, Small Business and Rural Issues Committee

My name is Ray Anderson

2987 Osmundsen Rd, Fitchburg, WI 53711; phone: (608) 698-9086; email: randersw@gmail.com

I am **Opposed to Senate Bill 611**

I was born and raised on a small farm in Washburn County. My father taught me to hunt, fish, trap and to raise and work with honey bees. I was taught to follow the rules and to treat firearms, the game we hunt, other hunters and non-hunters with respect.

I still hunt and fish today. I've been an active Hunter Ed Safety instructor for 17 years and am presently the lead instructor for our instructor group in Dane County.

- As an instructor, I have to maintain my proficiency as an instructor and be recertified at a minimum every three years.
- Our mission is to ensure that "all students" receive the same instruction and hands-on training.
- My fellow instructors and I have the necessary training, experience and follow the statewide, uniform structured lesson plans, which include "hands-on" instruction followed by a structured "hands-on" field test which all students must pass to become a certified hunter.
- Our goal for every class is that students have a safe and fun learning experience and to gain the necessary knowledge and thereby have the confidence to pass the field test.
- During the field test, students have to demonstrate and explain how to handle firearms safely, how to use a tree stand safely.
- Students are asked to memorize and are taught the importance of TAB-K, the four life time safety rules: Treat every firearm as if is loaded; Always point the muzzle in a safe direction; Be certain of your target, what's in front and what's beyond; Keep your finger outside of the trigger guard until ready to shoot.

During my years of instructing, parents and grandparents have repeatedly told me how important it is:

- That we as trained, certified instructors are willing to teach their children how to be safe hunters, how to properly use firearms and tree stands.
- To have hands-on instruction with field testing, not just Online Training.
- That their kids understand that it's not a video game; that unsafe, improper use of a firearm is how people, including themselves get injured and/or killed.
- To see how proud their kids are when they pass and that they understand the importance of what they have achieved. You don't get this from taking an Online Training class.

Another statement which I hear over and over again from parents is that, we as instructors, carry more weight when it comes to stressing the importance of firearm and tree stand safety; as parents, they know their kids don't always think, that their parents know what they are talking about.

SB 611 should not be rushed to passage. It doesn't consider:

- All the work that went into the Hunter Safety program which has reduced the number of accidents Statewide from 1964 to the present where we now have many years where Wisconsin does not have a single hunting fatality.
- That there are no standards in place as it pertains to a mentor's knowledge and expertise to ensure that they are qualified to be a mentor.
- That there is no uniform, standardized approach nor guidelines for mentors across the State to follow in order to assess and certify that a new hunter fully understands and has the knowledge to safely use a firearm and that they fully understand the deadly ramifications of improperly using a firearm.
- That there is no process in place for mentors to inform the DNR that a mentee has passed or failed. I'm not sure how such a process could actually work.

I've been told by hunters and non-hunters that knowing hunters had to take a course and pass a test to be certified gives them confidence that they are safe in the woods during hunting seasons.

Thank you for your time and willingness to take my position on this bill into consideration.