

PAUL TITTL

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 25TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Assembly Committee on Sporting Heritage

Assembly Bill 632

February 13, 2024

First of all, thank you Chairman Pronschinske and members of the committee for allowing me to testify before you today concerning Assembly 632 relating to defining a muzzle-loading firearm for hunting purposes.

Current Wisconsin law permits hunters to use muzzle-loading firearms. However, as the technology related to muzzle-loading firearms has improved, it's time to modify the current law so hunters can take advantage of these changes.

Current law does not include a definition for "muzzle-loading firearm." However, the administrative rules refer to it as "any gun other than a rifle, shotgun, or handgun that is a firearm with a solid breech plug attached with threads and capable of being loaded only from the muzzle." (NR 10.09 (1) (d))

The wording, "being loaded only from the muzzle" inadvertently excludes the use of newer, safer, and more accurate muzzle-loading technology.

With the newer technology, the bullet is still loaded from the muzzle, but the powder encapsulated charge is loaded from the breech.

The bill simply defines "muzzle-loading firearm" as "a firearm that shoots a projectile loaded exclusively from the muzzle." Therefore, the newer technology, loading the charge from the breech, is permitted.

This change will enable hunters to use a muzzle-loader that is cleaner, safer and ultimately more reliable than a traditional muzzle-loader. As a result, performance and accuracy are greatly improved.

I want to thank you for your consideration of this bill and the opportunity to testify before you today. I am happy to take any questions you may have.

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ROB STAFSHOLT

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P.O. Box 7882
Madison, WI 53707-7882

DATE: February 13, 2024
RE: Testimony on Assembly Bill 632
TO: Members of the Committee on Sporting Heritage
FROM: Senator Rob Stafsholt

Thank you Chairman Pronschinske and members of the Assembly Committee on Sporting Heritage for hearing Assembly Bill 632 relating to defining muzzle-loading firearm for hunting purposes.

Current law does not define “muzzle-loading firearm,” yet refers to it in statute as “any gun other than a rifle, shotgun, or handgun that is a firearm with a solid breech plug attached with threads and capable of being loaded only from the muzzle.” This wording is not only cumbersome and confusing, but it also inadvertently prohibits the use of newer, safer, and more accurate muzzle-loading technology in Wisconsin.

This bill simply defines “muzzle-loading firearm” as “a firearm that shoots a projectile loaded exclusively from the muzzle.” This definition is clear and concise, while also allowing for the use of new muzzle-loading technology that is impervious to temperature and moisture like older technology is, leading to a safer and more accurate shot.

Again, thank you for allowing me to testify on Assembly Bill 632. I would be happy to answer any questions, and I would appreciate your support on this piece of legislation.



Assembly Committee on Sporting Heritage

2023 Assembly Bill 632

Defining Muzzle-loading Firearm for Hunting Purposes

February 13, 2024

Good morning, Chair Pronschinske, and members of the Committee. My name is Scott Karel, and I am the Wildlife Regulation Policy Specialist for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. Thank you for the opportunity to testify, for informational purposes, on Assembly Bill 632 (AB 632), related to defining muzzle-loading firearms for hunting purposes.

Current administrative code states that a firearm may only be used during the muzzleloader firearm deer season if it has a solid breech plug attached with threads and is capable of being loaded only from the muzzle. The department recently promulgated clearing house rule CR 23-025 which would remove the requirement that a muzzleloader have a solid breech plug attached with threads. Instead, the only requirement for a muzzleloader is that it must be capable of being loaded only from the muzzle through the use of a ramrod. This is generally consistent with what is being proposed in AB 632. This rule was approved by the Natural Resource Board on October 25, 2023, and by the Governor on November 8, 2023. CR 23-025 was referred to this committee for review on December 1, 2023. No action was taken on the rule by this committee or by the Joint Committee for the Review of Administrative Rules. The department anticipates that this rule will go into effect on April 1, 2024.

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.

NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA
INSTITUTE FOR LEGISLATIVE ACTION
11250 WAPLES MILL ROAD
FAIRFAX, VIRGINIA 22030



NRA

February 12, 2024

Chairman Pronschinske and Members of the Wisconsin Assembly Committee on Sporting Heritage :

On behalf of the National Rifle Association (NRA) and our members in Wisconsin, I would like to express our strong support for Assembly Bill 632. This legislation would update the state's definition of "muzzleloader" to allow for the use of newer and safer technology.

Currently, Wisconsin's definition of a muzzleloader requires both the powder and the bullet to be loaded only through the muzzle. This proposed language would require only the bullet to be loaded from the muzzle. This would legalize new technology like the Federal Firestick and bring Wisconsin's definition in line with several surrounding states. This advancement allows both the powder and the primer to be safely loaded and unloaded from the breech while only the bullet is loaded from the muzzle. This allows for easier and safer transportation and use by younger and older generations that may not otherwise be able to participate in a primitive weapons season. This would also allow the powder to stay dry in adverse weather conditions ensuring a consistent and reliable ignition of powder and improved accuracy at standard ranges. This increase in reliability and ease of use allows muzzleloaders to be more accessible without creating an unfair advantage. This new development does not increase the number of shots or effective range when compared to many common in-line muzzleloaders.

Studies conducted at both the state and federal levels have found that hunter participation has been on the decline for several decades. We believe that updating outdated laws and regulations to accommodate newer technology is one way to increase recruitment, retention, and reactivation (R3) of hunters. This bill would help further that objective by allowing the use of innovative technology that makes hunting with a muzzleloader safer and easier while maintaining the spirit of the law. It's for these reasons the NRA encourages you to support Assembly Bill 632.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nicholas Buggia". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Nicholas Buggia-State Director NRA-ILA

NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA
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NRA





Attn: Assembly Committee on Sporting Heritage
Re: AB 632 – Muzzleloader Definition
Position: Support
Date: February 12, 2023

Honorable Members of the Assembly Committee on Sporting Heritage,

I write you today on behalf of the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation (CSF) to express support for Assembly Bill 632, which would include breech-charging muzzleloaders within Wisconsin's muzzleloader definition. Joining the majority of states in allowing modern muzzleloader technologies to be used during blackpowder hunting season expands hunting accessibility while honoring the State's longstanding outdoor traditions. I respectfully request that the members of this Committee support the passage of AB 632.

Founded in 1989, the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation 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.

AB 632 would allow hunters to use new breech-charging muzzleloader products that are safe and reliable while not changing the existing characteristics of blackpowder firearms seasons. These new products still require the projectile to be loaded through the muzzle, they still only accept one projectile at a time, and they have a similar effective range to muzzleloaders that are presently authorized for use. These products also eliminate a potential cause of inconsistency in presently authorized muzzleloaders – user-caused variances in powder loads. Eliminating this variable would enhance the consistency and repeatability of muzzleloaders afield while simultaneously reducing risk of injury to the user caused by overloading or double-charging the propellant.

Hunting, a staple of society in Wisconsin, plays an invaluable role in the management of the State's storied natural resources. Expanding the accessibility of muzzleloaders serves to enhance the recruitment, retention, and reactivation of Wisconsin sportsmen and women, thereby furthering conservation efforts in the Badger State. I respectfully request that you support the passage of this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Robert Matthews

Senior Coordinator, Great Lakes States
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation
rmatthews@congressionalsportsmen.org | 517-210-2890

Your Inside Connection to Outdoor Legislation

February 13, 2024

Chairman Pronschinske and Members of the Wisconsin Assembly Committee on Sporting Heritage:

I write on behalf of the members of the National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF) – The Firearm Industry Trade Association in support of Assembly Bill 632, a bill to update the definition of “muzzle-loading firearm” for hunting purposes. NSSF represents over 10,500 member companies in the firearm industry across the United States. According to most recent data, our industry employs over 8,000 Wisconsinites and in 2022, it had an impact of over \$1.7 billion in the state.

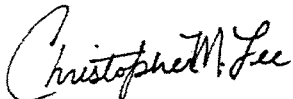
NSSF has been involved in recruitment, retention, and reactivation (R3) efforts for years. Today, NSSF leads R3 initiatives that include National Shooting Sports Month, +One, First Shots, #LetsGoShooting, and #LetsGoHunting, just to name a few. NSSF regularly partners with NGO’s, government wildlife agencies, and wildlife organizations on other R3 projects.

As we work to recruit more hunters, it is important that hunting be as accessible as possible. As hunting technology evolves, it is important for hunting regulations to be updated. One example of this innovation is the encapsulated propellant charge for muzzleloaders. This bill would allow for the encapsulated propellant charge to be used for muzzleloader season in Wisconsin. The sabot projectile is loaded into the barrel through the muzzle using a ramrod. The encapsulated powder charge is placed into the breech and a 209 primer is inserted into the capsule.

This encapsulated propellant charge is already legal for muzzleloading seasons in 27 states because it has multiple benefits. It makes hunting with muzzleloaders safer and more reliable by ensuring a consistent powder charge. It protects the powder from moisture and the elements. Finally, it is more user-friendly for new and youth hunters. It is important to note that this does not change the functionality or primitive nature of the muzzleloader.

For NSSF’s R3 efforts as defined above, it is important that hunting be as accessible as possible and technology like the encapsulated propellant charge helps with that access. We urge your support of Assembly Bill 632 and thank you for your time.

Respectfully,



Christopher Lee