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March 28, 2013

The Honorable Brad Witt, Chair
House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee
900 Court St NE, H-374
Salem, OR, 97301

RE: HB 2624 – Authorizes Counties to Exempt themselves from Hounding Ban - Oppose

Dear Representative Witt:

On behalf of the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and our more than 2.5 million members and supporters nationwide, including more than 25,000 Oregon residents, I wish to register our opposition to HB 2624. HB 2624 would grant counties the authority to place before the voters within their jurisdiction a petition to exempt the county from the ban on using dogs to hunt black bear and cougars as well as the use of bait to hunt black bears.

HB 2624 has huge implications for statewide policy making. After all, if HB 2624 is adopted and counties exercise their new found power to overturn a petition that was supported by a majority of voters in the state, what is to stop future efforts to overturn any other petitions by granting such immense authority to local jurisdictions? The ballot initiative process is designed to give Oregon voters a voice in policy making – HB 2624 undermines the will of the people and subverts the democratic initiative process.

Aside from the political implications, it is a fact that cougar takings have increased with the adoption of the Cougar Management Plan in 2006 and the subsequent passage of HB 2971 in 2007. There is simply no need to authorize the use of dogs to hunt cougars at the local level.

For these reasons, we strongly oppose HB 2624's policy of giving counties veto power over state approved initiatives.

If you have any questions about the ASPCA's position, please feel free to contact me at Kevin.oneill@aspca.org or 916.214.0476. Thank you for your time in considering our position.

Sincerely,

Kevin O'Neill
Senior Legislative Director, Western Region