

February 23, 2019

To: The Committee considering [Senate Bill 723](#), which would prohibit people from "organizing, sponsoring, promoting, conducting or participating in contest, competition, tournament or derby that has objective of taking wildlife for prizes or other inducement or for entertainment."

I share your concerns about contests or celebrations that are organized to kill as many animals as possible within a given period of time. However, I have reservations based on the language of the bill.

From the bill:

"(b) "Wildlife" means amphibians, reptiles, feral swine as defined under State Department of Agriculture rules, wild birds as defined under State Fish and Wildlife Commission rules and other wild mammals as defined under commission rules."

1. I know you are aware of killing contests for coyotes. I trust you also know that there are similar events for ground squirrels, mainly in Central and Eastern Oregon. Ground squirrels of all species are wild mammals too. Do you plan to include them? At least one Oregon city has a weekend of shooting ground squirrels as part of an annual celebration. In addition, organized expeditions to shoot ground squirrels (colloquially called "sage rats" and other local names) are a source of income for guides, outfitters, and ranchers. <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=127358246>. Untold thousands of them are shot in contests or other "hunts." Isn't that ironic: kill the coyotes that are the main predators of ground squirrels?

2. My main concern, however, is that the law might potentially be used to argue against bird dog field trials, which are organized under the auspices of the American Kennel Club, American Field, and other national organizations. You may be familiar with this sport. These are contests in which owners compete to demonstrate their dogs' level of training. Owners compete for ribbons, trophies and points toward Championship status. In most trials, game birds raised and used in accordance with specific Fish and Wildlife permits are purchased for use under simulated hunting conditions. In some venues, wild birds are hunted, with official permission. Sometimes birds are killed, sometimes not. Sometimes they simply fly away.

The object of field trials is quite different from the killing derbies your bill is meant to address. Mass killing of animals is not involved. Yet, I hope you can see that some person or organization might try to apply the law to field trials, unless they are specifically exempted.

I ask that the bill not be presented for passage in its present wording, but that it be amended to specifically exempt bird dog field trials and training. Thank you for your consideration.

3. I don't approve of the mass killings you mean to stop with this bill. In the Dakotas and Montana the victims are prairie dogs (a keystone species) and I have walked through silent, hauntingly empty prairie dog towns littered with little bones. However, I am not sure how the situation rises to the level of an "emergency (except for the animals). (**SECTION 3. This 2019 Act being necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health and safety, an emergency is declared to exist, and this 2019 Act takes effect on its passage.**)

Respectfully,
Barbara Saigo