

May 19, 2019

Chair Ginny Burdick
Senate Committee on Rules
900 Court Street, NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Support SB 723

Dear Chair Ginny Burdick and Members of the Committee:

As members of a broad coalition dedicated to responsible wildlife management, we are writing to urge you to pass SB 723, the bill to ban cruel and wasteful coyote killing contests, to the full Senate for a floor vote.

The issue came to light last year when a contest was held in Harney County in which participants competed for prizes for killing the most coyotes, judged by the cumulative weight of their dead bodies. At least five such contests have been held in our state in recent years (see attached).

Oregon's wildlife is held and managed in the public's trust, and as such, coyote killing contests violate the spirit and tenets of responsible stewardship, sportsmanship, and respect for the public's wildlife. Motivated by the financial rewards of killing the most or heaviest coyotes, participants are not likely to abide by the rules and values embraced by ethical sportsmen and sportswomen. Therefore, there is a compelling state interest in ending coyote killing contests to prevent animal cruelty, uphold the state's longstanding hunting tradition of respect for the hunted, and to protect our wildlife from non-science-based, mass killings that are likely to be viewed as barbaric, cruel, and wasteful by the majority of Oregonians.

A new poll by the Remington Research Group (see attached) found that Oregonians oppose such wanton cruelty and killing of our state's treasured wildlife. More than three-fourths of Oregonians who were polled agreed that native carnivores like coyotes play a vital role in Oregon's ecosystems, and a strong majority of those polled, across all five of our state's Congressional districts, said they support legislation to ban coyote killing contests. (Please see below for a recent guest opinion in the Statesman Journal by Bruce Starr, former Republican state senator.)

Additionally, science has amply demonstrated that the indiscriminate, mass killing of coyotes is not an effective means of mitigating conflicts with livestock. To this point, a recent issue of Oregon Small Farm News highlighted research finding that lethal control of coyotes only increased livestock losses, and that coyotes with no record of livestock depredation, and who have established themselves in a territory that overlaps with sheep pastures, can actually prevent livestock losses by excluding coyotes from neighboring packs who may have learned to kill sheep. A burgeoning list of research studies also indicate that the mass killing of coyotes will not increase populations of game species (see attached).

Finally, a growing number of state lawmakers and wildlife management professionals and agencies support an end to these pointless and unsporting events. Just this week, a Washington Post article highlighted recent bans enacted by the Vermont and New Mexico legislatures, the introduction of a proposed ban by the Arizona Game and Fish Commission itself, and testimony from Oregon Fish and

Game Commission Chair Mike Finley in favor of SB 723 in the March hearing of the Senate Judiciary Committee (see attached).

As a coalition representing concerned Oregonians throughout the state, we hope you will support sound, science-based wildlife policies by passing SB 723 to the full Senate.

Thank you for considering our position, and for your service to the people and wildlife of Oregon.