



June 18, 2019

Chair Paul Holvey
House Committee on Rules
900 Court Street, NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Support SB 723B

Dear Chair Holvey 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 723B, the bill to ban cruel and wasteful coyote killing contests, to the full House 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 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 indiscriminate killings that have no basis in science-based management and 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).

A growing number of state lawmakers and wildlife management professionals and agencies also support an end to these pointless and unsporting events. Just a few weeks ago, 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).

Finally, we urge you to reject the B12 amendment, put forth by the Oregon Hunters Association, which would allow organizations such as theirs to hold coyote killing contests and related raffles as long as they "promote hunting recreation and **in which the organization limits participation to members of the organization.**" This amendment creates an exception that will render the bill meaningless, because the same killing contests will be held, but under the auspices of such an organization. Regardless of whether the contest is sponsored by a nonprofit or an ad hoc group of individuals, the objective is the same – to indiscriminately kill as many coyotes as possible in order to win a prize.

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

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



<https://www.statesmanjournal.com/story/opinion/2019/05/17/bill-banning-coyote-killing-contests-oregon-stuck-rules-committee-oregon-legislature/3687075002/>

Coyote killing contests are wasteful, wanton behavior counter to Oregon's values

Bruce Starr, Guest Opinion Published 5:52 p.m. PT May 17, 2019

Oregonians of all stripes, including Republicans and Democrats, hunters and non-hunters alike, hold our wildlife in high regard.

Our state's proud hunting tradition is influenced by humane values that are uniquely Oregonian, and are reflected in our public policy choices.

In 1994, Oregon voters overwhelmingly passed Measure 18 to ban unethical practices for hunting bears and cougars, and in the last general election, they passed [Measure 100](#) to stop the trafficking in the parts and products of the world's most imperiled wild animals.

That's why it's easy to see why [SB 723](#), the bill to ban coyote killing contests in Oregon, has received bipartisan support in the Oregon legislature.

Lawmakers and citizens alike are repulsed by the idea of targeting Oregon's wildlife with mass slaughter for the sake of winning a prize.

An undercover investigation by the Humane Society of the United States showed participants in a contest in Harney County last December slinging the dead bodies of dozens of coyotes onto the ground to be weighed, and joking about how they were killed. The contestant who killed the most coyotes – judged by their total weight – won a prize.

This kind of wasteful, wanton behavior is counter to Oregon's values and a slap in the face to the public trust doctrine, which holds that wildlife is to be managed for the benefit of all of us, not just a select few.

After passing Senate Judiciary Committee on a bipartisan, 5-2 vote with a "do pass" recommendation Senate Bill 723 was referred to Senate Rules committee where it appeared stalled for nearly a month.

Finally late last week the bill was scheduled for a hearing and possible work session for Monday afternoon.

Since it was introduced early in the legislative session, citizens from throughout Oregon have contacted their state senators to voice support for SB 723, which has been amended to alleviate concerns by some in the hunting community.

Citizens have pointed out that these killing contests are not supported by the best available science and are not used by wildlife managers as a means of managing coyotes.

Contest organizers like to claim they are helping to suppress the coyote population to benefit farmers and ranchers, but in fact, coyotes tend to respond to large, sudden losses in their population by boosting their rate of reproduction. By indiscriminately killing every coyote they can find, contest participants are removing coyotes that avoid livestock and instead prey on rodents and pests that damage crops.

[Note that SB 723 does not ban coyote hunting](#) – coyotes can still be killed year-round, with no bag limit, using almost any means available. The bill merely bans killing them as part of a contest, which leads to the kind of wanton waste that the vast majority of Oregonians find completely unacceptable.

I encourage the Senate leadership and members of the Rules Committee to stand solidly with Oregonians and move this important legislation to the full Senate for a vote.

Bruce Starr represented Washington County from 2003-2014 as a state senator.