

February 3, 2023

RE: Supplemental Comments on HJR 5, Constitutional Right to Hunt

Chair Fahey, Vice Chair Breeze-Iverson, Vice Chair Kopf, and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to offer oral testimony yesterday in opposition to HJR 5, the measure that would ask voters to enshrine in the Oregon Constitution a constitutional right to engage in recreational hunting, trapping, and associated activities.

I offer these supplemental comments to address the testimony yesterday by proponents that the coalition supporting HJR 5 was “diverse.” The organizations listed were overwhelming pro-hunting and trapping organizations, representing a tiny minority of Oregonians who view wild animals as targets, trophies, and pests. These groups claim to support the right to hunt and shoot wild animals as a means of addressing “food security” concerns, yet they all promote recreational consumptive uses of wildlife, such as hunting and trapping.

Most revealing is that the proponents’ coalition included Safari Club International, a group dedicated specifically to the killing of wild animals not for food, but for trophies and bragging rights. SCI members pay tens of thousands of dollars to shoot iconic and imperiled wild species like African elephants, African lions, and rhinos, and bring their heads and skins back to display on their walls. If this bill is really about “food security,” not enshrining the right to kill animals for sport, why is SCI weighing in?

As I stated in my testimony, modern wildlife hunting in Oregon is not done primarily as a food gathering exercise, but as a recreational pastime. Creating a constitutional right to engage in that pastime trivializes the constitutional amendment process and would grant the hunting minority preeminence over the 95 percent of Oregonians who do not hunt and who want wildlife managed for its own sake.

In conclusion, I invite you to consider the real motives behind the backers of HJR 5, which is to serve the interests of a small but vocal and privileged minority with an agenda to preserve their recreational activities in our state constitution.

Thank you for considering my views and for your service to the people and wildlife of Oregon.

Scott Beckstead
Director of Campaigns
sbeckstead@centerforahumaneconomy.org