

Submitter: DEBRA MERKIN  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Natural Resources and  
Wildfire  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB769

Dear Members of the Senate Natural Resources and Wildlife Committee,

- Thank you for this opportunity to weigh in on the issue of using hounds to hunt cougars in Oregon. I have lived as an urban citizen and, for the last number of years, as a rural one. I understand the issues faced by communities out here in Crook and other counties east of the cascades. What we have here is not only an issue about wildlife; it is also about what voters have twice voted: to ban the inhumane and unsporting use of hounds to hunt cougars. Whether it is SB769 or SB 412, both undermine the will of Oregon voters. There was the initial vote (1994), then the “are you sure” vote (1996). We are sure. Hunting with hounds is not only cruel, it violates the ethics of fair chase. A 2019 poll by Remington Research Group found that the majority of Oregon voters, 65 percent, are opposed to the trophy hunting of Oregon’s iconic cougars. Measure 18 already allows state and federal wildlife agents to hound cougars in the advent of threats to property or public safety and to carry out state wildlife-management objectives. This exemption has successfully removed individual cougars involved in conflicts with humans, pets, and livestock while retaining the protections the voters want from abusive hunting methods.
- Culling a native carnivore population, especially one as sensitive as cougars, is not an effective management approach and will likely disrupt their communities, resulting in more, not less, conflicts with humans, pets, and livestock.
- As no doubt you will hear in oral testimony and read in statements by wildlife professionals, studies show that trophy hunting of cougars exacerbate conflicts with humans, pets, and livestock because when adult cats are removed – mainly resident adult males – younger, less experienced cats move into those vacancies. They are the individuals most likely to engage in livestock predation. This is not a rural versus urban situation. Science does not support this practice. Ethical hunters do not support this practice, and voters clearly do not. I urge you to vote NO, OPPOSE, on both measures.