

## Oregon Senate Committee on Natural Resources & Wildfire

**Re: SB 769 - Allowing voters to vote locally on the use of dogs for cougar management with Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife Oversight**

February 10, 2025

Chairman Golden & Committee Members,

I write to ask for your **support for SB 769** which would allow voters in each county to vote on a local measure to allow the use of dogs for the purpose of the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife managing cougar populations. Thank you to Senator Nash and Representative Levy for introducing this bill and continuously fighting to allow us to vote on this issue. Thank you Chairman Golden for allowing a public hearing on this important issue.

Originally introduced in the 2013 Regular Legislative Session as HB 2624 this same bill passed the House of Representatives that session with 40 votes in favor. Sponsored by then Representatives Clem and Sprenger at the request of the Oregon Outdoor Council the bill died in the Senate, but the support it enjoyed was the result of a lot of bi-partisan work. At that time, Governor Kotek was the Speaker of the House and was one of the 40 State Representatives that voted in support of that bill at the time. I recall this vote in order to highlight the ability of 14 Democrat and 26 Republican members of the House to come together and pass a bill that would do one thing, give voters the chance to vote on this issue. I highlight it with hope that you can find a way to work together on giving us the opportunity to vote on this issue locally.

Measure 18 passed 31 years ago. To put that into perspective, that was the year the World Wide Web was born, a.k.a. the Internet. There were no smartphones, flat-screen TV's or DVD's. At that time, I was 14 years old and voters that were in their 40's are now in their 70's. Travis Tritt also performed at the Super Bowl that year and was the last country artist to do so I believe. To say the least, things have changed. While many things have changed one thing that hasn't is what you will hear from the same special interests that are responsible for one of the greatest wildlife management disasters in Oregon history, the ban on the use of dogs for cougar and bear management. You are going to hear that the voters have spoken, and that's correct, voters did speak on this issue. **31 YEARS AGO**. They spoke by passing the measure 51.79% (629, 527 votes) to 48.21% (586,026) with a difference of 43,501 votes out of a total of about 1.2 million

cast. To provide a little more perspective, there were over 2.3 million votes cast in this past November's election. Times have changed and voters deserve the ability to vote on this after that long.

The consequences of the ban on the use of dogs for cougar management are many, but the most egregious and terrifying is the death of Dianna Bober, a Gresham woman that was out for a hike near Mt. Hood. Her horrific death could have been prevented as cougars are more likely to flee from humans if they have been pursued by dogs and humans. This was recently confirmed and published in the journal of Canadian Wildlife Biology and Management after a study involving the Kalispel Tribe in Washington's Spokane and Pend Oreille counties. This is just the most recent study of many that scientifically supports using dogs for cougar management. Unfortunately, the extreme threat to public safety keeps getting worse, yet somehow ignored and normalized. Do a quick google search for cougar sightings in Oregon and a bunch of home security videos pop up on local news across the state showing cougars prowling neighborhoods without fear of humans or dogs. I have personally interviewed dozens of people, some that came within inches of being attacked by a cougar. They all ask the same thing, why can't we vote on this when we are the ones living with this every day?

Passing SB 769 will only allow voters to vote. That's it. The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife Commission, which has been hand picked by multiple Democrat governors, will retain control over all regulations related to the use of dogs to hunt or pursue cougars. Why not put this tool back in the hands of professional biologists and scientists and let them choose when to allow it or to only allow it under specific circumstances as science dictates? Their job will become easier when this important wildlife management tool is returned to their tool box, but it will be their decision. Over the last 31 years we have witnessed our mule deer and blacktail deer populations get decimated. We've had hundreds of meetings, sent thousands and thousands of emails, begged for compromise, studies and pilot programs and have been met with a resounding no each time. Regardless of the amount of irrefutable scientific data supporting this bill or the thousands of pets and livestock killed each and every time our voices fall flat. Sportsmen and women are responsible for the laws and funding that have recovered cougars, whitetail deer, wood ducks and many many more species. At every opportunity with every game species sportsmen and women have led with the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation.

It was Oregon sportsmen and women that advocated and obtained protection for cougars in the early 1900's when their population was dangerously low at around 100 animals. Sportsmen and women protected and conserved them and with the use of dogs as a critical management tool recovered their population. It is sportsmen and

women that are paying for wolf management and the management of every other game species in Oregon. Measure 18 is the only time in Oregon history that a wildlife management tool was taken away from state biologists preventing them from effectively managing bear and cougar populations like they do every other species. The evidence is clear that science NOT emotion should govern fish and wildlife conservation.

It's been said that this bill could set a bad precedent for wildlife management. Nothing could be further from the truth in my opinion. The truth is that this bill will provide an opportunity to change the dangerous precedent of ballot box biology that was set by the Humane Society of the United States, Oregon Humane Society and other anti-hunting groups. The HSUS and their deep pockets have done exactly what their former CEO Wayne Pacelle once gleefully stated

***“We are going to use the ballot box and the democratic process to stop all hunting in the US. We will take it species by species until all hunting is stopped in California. Then we will take it state by state.”***

After California they came to Oregon and Washington and used the same deceptive tactics to narrowly pass their ideology void of all science. In fact, the proponents of measure 18 (Animal Protection Institute and Oregon Humane Society) hired a known poacher so they could get footage of illegal hunts and then used that footage during the campaign to deceive voters. When asked about the incident, CEO of the Oregon Humane Society called the incident *“embarrassing,”* but added, *“Sometimes you have to deal with dirty people to clean up a problem.”*

What's evident is that when subjected to any sort of peer review process or scientific scrutiny their ballot box policies have not only failed, but cost lives and millions of dollars over several decades. The good news is that voters are more informed today than ever and most recently defeated the Humane Society's effort in Colorado to deceive voters into banning hunting of three more species; cougar, bobcats and lynx. Thankfully an overwhelming majority of voters in Colorado chose to leave management decisions to wildlife professionals at the Colorado Parks and Wildlife.

There's been some fuss over the years about the potential that some counties would allow the use of dogs and others wouldn't and that may cause confusion. Well look no further than the 2025 Oregon Big Game Regulations to ease your mind. Or, go goose hunting on the west side of Interstate 5 and try identifying between 7 different subspecies of the Canadian Goose while in flight and you will quickly understand a hunter's ability to understand and follow regulations. (Side note, you can't hunt waterfowl on the west side of Interstate 5 without a Goose Permit that you must take a

test and pass to obtain.) Let's be honest though, it would only be a few counties that wouldn't vote to allow the use of dogs so it would be pretty easy to follow the regulations. I appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 769. I ask that you put science and conservation over emotion and rhetoric. I ask that you hold a Work Session and vote to support the ability of every voter to have the opportunity to vote on this important issue locally with ODFW oversight.

Sincerely,

Jerod Broadfoot  
72369 SW Korvoal Rd.  
Pendleton, Oregon