



To: The Honorable David Deen
Chairman, House Committee on Natural Resources, Fish, and Wildlife
Vermont State House
115 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05633

Re: H.B. 31

Position: SUPPORT

Date: February 20, 2018

Chairman Deen:

My name is Brent Miller, and I am the Senior Director, Northeastern States for the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation. I am also a Vermont resident, and avid hunter who has suffered hearing damage after years spent afield. To that end, I am writing today to express the strong support of the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation for H.B. 31, legislation that would allow myself and fellow Vermonters to protect their hearing while hunting.

Since 1989 the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation has maintained a singleness of purpose that has guided the organization to become the most respected and trusted sportsmen's organization in the political arena. CSF's mission is to work with Congress, governors, and state legislatures to protect and advance hunting, angling, recreational shooting, and trapping. The unique and collective force of the Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus (CSC), the Governors Sportsmen's Caucus (GSC) and the National Assembly of Sportsmen's Caucuses (NASC), working closely with CSF, and with the support of major hunting, recreational fishing & shooting, and trapping organizations, serves as an unprecedented network of pro-sportsmen elected officials that advance the interests of America's hunters and anglers.

As I mentioned at the outset, I am writing in support of H.B. 31. If passed, this bill would allow for the lawful use of firearm suppressors while hunting. Allowing suppressors to be used for hunting has numerous positive benefits including hearing protection, reduced recoil and muzzle rise resulting in increased shooter confidence, allowing for more consistent and accurate shots, improved relations for hunters and recreational shooters with the general public, and the potential recruitment and retention of new hunters and shooting sports participants due to the favorable

attributes of suppressors.

Suppressor Background

Suppressors, also known as “silencers,” are the hearing protection of the 21st Century sportsman. Despite common myths and misconceptions, suppressors do not silence host firearms. Suppressors are engineered to reduce the sound signature of a gunshot, minimize felt recoil, increase accuracy, and are quickly becoming a favored accessory of shooters nationwide. Suppressors work by trapping the expanding gasses at the muzzle of a firearm, allowing them to slowly cool, in a similar fashion to car mufflers. By decreasing the overall sound signature, suppressors help to preserve the hearing of recreational shooters, hunters, and hunting dogs around the world.

Even the most effective suppressors on the smallest calibers, like .22 LR, reduce the peak sound level of a gunshot to around 110-120 decibel (dB). To put that in perspective, according to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), that is as loud as a jackhammer (110 dB) or an ambulance siren (120 dB).

When considering hunting caliber firearms, which average between 155-185 dB unsuppressed, the best suppressors on the market reduce the peak sound level to around 130-150 dB. While this is a tremendous reduction in noise level, it is still as loud as a jet engine at takeoff (140 dB). Although there is variation, well-engineered suppressors generally reduce noise levels by about 20-35 dB, roughly the same amount as earplugs or earmuffs. However, most hunters do not wear hearing protection in the field because they want to hear their surroundings. Suppressors therefore offer a practical, and effective form of hearing protection.

Addressing Potential Concerns

Opponents of suppressor use for hunting often posit that their legalization will result in an increase in poaching incidents. This position is largely based on the misconception that suppressors completely silence firearms. States that have recently legalized their use have seen no increase in poaching. In part, this is due to the fact that suppressors are highly regulated devices.

Suppressors are regulated under the National Firearms Act (NFA) of 1934, the same act which regulates machine guns and short barreled rifles. These items, which fall under the purview of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), carry severe penalties for criminal use. In order to purchase a suppressor, an individual must find a licensed dealer, send the appropriate paperwork to the ATF along with a one-time \$200 tax per suppressor, undergo an extensive FBI background check, and undergo a NICS check at the point of purchase. As of September, 2017, wait times for approval of suppressor purchases were found to be in excess of 9 months.

Further, suppressors are already legal to use for recreational shooting purposes in Vermont, and if one were so inclined to poach an animal with a suppressed firearm, they already have the ability to do so.

Closing

While there remains a large amount of misinformation concerning suppressors, realistically they are a useful tool with multiple positive applications. As such, the Congressional Sportsmen’s Foundation supports H.B. 31 due to the numerous positive benefits of the technology, including: hearing protection, reduced recoil and muzzle rise resulting in increased shooter confidence,

allowing for more consistent and accurate shots, improved relations for hunters and recreational shooters with the general public, and the potential recruitment and retention of new hunters and shooting sports participants due to the favorable attributes of suppressors.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this discussion. Should you require any additional information on this matter, please feel free to contact me at any time.

Sincerely,



Brent Miller

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CC: The Honorable Mary Sullivan, *Vice Chair*
The Honorable Steve Beyor, *Ranking Member*
The Honorable David Ainsworth
The Honorable Paul Lefebvre
The Honorable James McCullough
The Honorable Carol Ode
The Honorable Trevor Squirrell, *Clerk*
The Honorable Thomas Terenzini