

Testimony-House Natural Resources- 4/7/21—David Kelley

Madame Chair-

I want to thank the Committee for considering H.172. My name is David Kelley. I am Vice-Chair of the Vermont Wildlife Coalition.

I grew up in Vermont. Both sides of my family have lived here for at least five generations. My father was the Deputy Commissioner of Agriculture. My grandfather was the State Treasurer. Almost all of us hunt and fish. I think I know something about Vermont traditions. If we are hunting an animal and we are going to kill it — we do it with skill, care and, above all, respect. If leaving a frightened, panic-stricken animal suffering with injuries and without food or water for hours and sometimes days ever had anything to do with any Vermont tradition we should all be ashamed.

On their website the Vermont trappers say their mission is: “Conserving wildlife and preserving our outdoor heritage for future generations of outdoorsmen and women.”

Here is how that is being done:

<https://youtu.be/RSew5eJOzOU?t=107>

This is not about 10 year old children exploring nature. The trapper’s website goes on to say that their mission is to provide: “...trapper education, emphasizing the most humane techniques in harvesting fur bearers, and giving special consideration to conservation of wildlife species.”

There is nothing “humane” about a trap that snaps shut with 90 pounds of pressure per square inch on the legs or head of a fox, bobcat or dog, crushing arteries and leaving the animal panicked and flailing, often with broken bones and desperate enough to chew off its own paw or leg until the trapper comes along and puts it out of its misery. In most instances these animals are being destroyed because some people consider this a form of “recreation.”

I lived in Montana for five years where I sometimes helped a respected hunting guide and where I sometimes worked with a trapper. There is no skill whatsoever involved in baiting a trap near a beaver lodge or a bobcat den. Without seeing a fox, dog or beaver struggling in a leghold or conibear trap no one can fully grasp how hideous these things are. There is just no justification for the suffering inflicted by these devices in the name of “recreation.”

A recent poll conducted by the [Center for Rural Studies](#) at the University of Vermont revealed that the vast majority of Vermonters believe that we should make these traps illegal. At a minimum they should be illegal on the public lands that are owned and shared by all of us. The few people who want to continue this “recreation” shouldn’t have the right to impose this behavior on our public lands when the vast majority of us oppose it.

The American Animal Hospital Association, the World Veterinary Association, the Sierra Club and even the National Animal Control Association all strongly oppose the use of leghold traps. They are illegal in eight states and over 100 countries.

Article 18, Section 12b of the Colorado Constitution says: “It shall be unlawful to take wildlife with any leghold trap, any instant kill body-gripping design trap, or by poison or snare in the state of Colorado.”

Vermont should follow Colorado’s lead.