

VTFSC Testimony on S.281
April 6, 2022 – House Natural Resources, Fish & Wildlife Committee
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My name is Chris Bradley, and I am the President & Executive Director of the Vermont Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs. In the interests of full disclosure, I am a completely unpaid volunteer, and I am also a registered lobbyist for the Federation, with the Federation being a registered Lobbying Organization.

I make specific mention of being a registered lobbyist and representing a registered lobbying organization, because the Federation plays by the rules of Lobbying as outlined by the Secretary of State. The Federation pays for the privilege to lobby, and we suffer penalties when we do not report our lobbying expenses in a timely fashion. This is not true of all the groups you will be hearing from today, in fact one organization in particular flaunts those rules, and they even use a 501(c)3 (tax-deductible charitable organization) to fund their efforts – which is NOT kosher. As a 501(c)3 they can educate, but they are exceptionally limited in the extent they can “lobby”, but I doubt there is anyone listening that would suggest that they are NOT lobbying. They get away with it however because the Secretary of State has no enforcement powers, the Attorney General has bigger fish to fry, and the IRS is exceptionally slow at examining and reigning in scofflaw groups. So: They skate.

In regards to S.281: The Federation is exceptionally pleased with the direction that the Senate took given that this bill began as an outright ban. With the hunting of coyote with hounds, we have what we all currently understand is a completely unregulated activity. We do not know how many Vermonters take part in this activity; there is no organized group representing this activity, but we conjecture it is a fairly small group. It simply makes sense to us that we first look to regulate this activity as opposed to an outright ban. We therefore fully support the new version of this bill, which charges the Fish & Wildlife Department to look at what rules and regulations should be recommended, and then allow the Fish & Wildlife Board to make those rules and regulations happen.

While I intend to be very short and succinct with this testimony, I have three additional points that I would like to share with the committee, beyond the lack of honesty in regards to “lobbying” that I mentioned previously.

The first point is that it has been made clear from written and oral statements made by registered agents of groups who are demanding a ban on hunting coyote with hounds, that they want nothing less than an outright ban on the use of dogs in all hunting, no matter what the game species is. THAT has severe ramifications to a number of hunting activities which utilize man's-best-friend; such initiatives would include rabbit and bird hunting; and we will not support any such bills that may come forward.

Secondly: Our opposition has raised the issue of coyote hunting being legalized dog fighting, and they have paid thousands of dollars in unreported lobbying media buys for color advertisements to that effect. This is simply not true. Hunting hounds are expensive animals, and vet bills are equally costly. Given the the relative value of these animals to their owners, both financially and emotionally, hounds-people do NOT train their hounds to kill lest they become injured. Hounds are trained to tree or corner,

and while every sport may have bad actors – rules and regulations will insure compliance.

Finally, testimony has been given previously that attempted to suggest that petitions to the Fish & Wildlife Board have been summarily ignored, and that is not true. In one well-documented instance captured on video, subsequent to presenting a petition to the F&W Board, the group that had submitted it all got up and left the meeting. When the F&W Board then later entered into discussion on the proposal, and had questions about it: No one was present from the group to answer any of those questions. As a result of a complete and utter lack of substantive input or answers to defend their proposed petition – the Board did the only thing it could – it set the petition aside. The Board was ready and willing to discuss – but the proponents were not there – but now those same proponents say that they were ignored.

Again: The VTFSC supports S.281 as written, and I thank you for the invitation and opportunity to speak today on this bill.