



To: House Committee on Judiciary
115 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05633

Re: House Bill 392 - An act relating to prohibiting possession of firearms and dangerous weapons in State buildings and on State land

Position: Oppose

Date: March 10, 2025

Honorable Members of the Committee on Judiciary,

My name is Fred Bird, and I am the Manager for the Northeastern States for the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation (CSF) and a licensed Vermont sportsman. I write to you today, respectfully urging you to oppose House Bill 392 (HB 392) – legislation that poses to severely impact Vermont's recreational shooting and hunting community's access to state owned, public lands where recreational shooting is currently permitted.

Founded in 1989, CSF is the informed authority across outdoor issues and serves as the primary conduit for influencing public policy. Working with the Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus (CSC), the Governors Sportsmen's Caucus (GSC), and the National Assembly of Sportsmen's Caucuses (NASC), CSF gives a voice to hunters, anglers, recreational shooters, and trappers on Capitol Hill and throughout state capitols advocating on vital outdoor issues that are the backbone of our nation's conservation legacy. It is from this background – with more than three and a half decades of organizational history, and a staff with approximately two centuries of combined policy experience on sportsmen's issues – that I voice our opposition to HB 392

While HB 392 does not apply to hunting as stated in, “(8) a firearm or dangerous weapon carried by a person incident to lawful activities, including hunting, on State-owned or State-leased lands if the person is licensed as required by law and is otherwise in compliance with all applicable federal, State, and municipal laws and rules, including regulations promulgated by the Fish and Wildlife Board,” no such license exists for recreational shooting activities.

By restricting access to state lands for recreational shooting, HB 392 could negatively impact conservation funding due to citizens choosing not to participate in recreational shooting because of the loss of access to nearly 168k acres where recreational shooting is presently authorized.

Your Inside Connection to Outdoor Legislation

Vermont's law-abiding recreational shooters have long played a vital role in funding conservation and wildlife management efforts. Under the American System of Conservation Funding (ASCF), a unique "user pays – public benefits" structure, Vermont's sportsmen and women and the hunting and shooting communities generate tens of millions of dollars each year for the VTFWD.

It is widely recognized that recreational target shooters, who per-capita, spend even more money on firearms and ammunition than hunters, are the financial keystone for the ASCF. According to a National Shooting Sports Foundation estimate, "80 percent of Pittman-Robertson excise tax contributions are generated by sales attributed to recreational shooting." By restricting access to state lands HB 392 will discourage participation in recreational shooting. There is no question that conservation funding in this nation needs immediate support.

These funds are generated through license sales and a self-imposed manufacturer-level 10-11% federal excise tax on firearm and ammunition purchases through the Pittman-Robertson Act. These funds are collected by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and then distributed to the states to fund state fish and wildlife agencies and their important work as our nation's primary managers of our collective fish and wildlife resources. Last year, the USFWS dispersed nearly \$1 billion in total funding to the state agencies through Pittman-Robertson, of which \$800 million was directly tied to taxes paid by the firearm and ammunition industry. Here in Vermont, \$5.9 million was received through Pittman-Robertson, providing vital funding for the state's conservation, habitat restoration, and wildlife management efforts of both game and non-game species.

Unfortunately, HB 392, if passed, would create a barrier for Vermont's recreational shooting activities, and would thus threaten the very funding that supports the state's habitats and wildlife populations—something to which all Vermont citizens should care about. In recognition of the far-reaching negative impact HB 392 would predictably have on Vermont's recreational shooting community, and likely also on wildlife conservation throughout the state, I urge the members of this committee to vote "NO" and oppose HB 392.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to comment on this legislation. If you have questions or would like any additional information, please feel free to contact me using the information below.

Sincerely,



Fred Bird
Manager, Northeastern States | Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation
110 North Carolina Ave, SE | Washington, DC 20003
fbird@congressionalsportsmen.org | 603-583-7484

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