

***Boone and Crockett Club *** Delta Waterfowl *** Ducks Unlimited *** Mule Deer Foundation *** Pheasants Forever *** Quail Forever *** Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation *** Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership *** Wild Sheep Foundation ***

February 22, 2023

Sen. Steve Fitzpatrick, Majority Floor Leader
Montana State Capitol
1301 E 6th Ave.
Helena, MT 59601

Re: SB 287; Revise property laws

Dear Senate Majority Floor Leader Fitzpatrick:

We write in ongoing opposition to SB 287, as it undermines the state's ability to manage wildlife as a public resource and would fundamentally alter the financial capacity of the Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks Department while eroding the public support for conservation and wildlife management in Montana.

We sympathize with the people who were impacted by the passage of I-143 in 2000, however this legislation goes much farther than a simple remedy for lost income or damages to their businesses. However, our counsel's reading of the bill is, if passed, landowners would have grounds to sue the state for any licensing change that impacts their outfitting or access lease business. This would, in practice, turn private land into private hunting preserves, with no reasonable regulation associated with the management of wildlife. This is an unacceptable reality for our community.

Wildlife in the state of Montana is a public trust, held for all and owned by no one person, as in the rest of the United States. This public resource should be managed for the benefit of all citizens and not simply for the benefit of one self-interest. Further, as resident hunters, landowners and outfitters are now working together to pass legislation that means to build bridges, and work on a new season setting proposal in 2023/2024, this bill would undermine that effort. Under your leadership, Sen. Fitzpatrick, and the leadership of the Governor, this session is far less chaotic and challenging on wildlife management issues, and that is greatly appreciated. However, if this bill continues to move forward, we fear that peace will be broken.

For these reasons, we continue to oppose SB 287 and urge you and your caucus to vote no on this misguided proposal.

Sincerely,

Boone and Crockett Club
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Ducks Unlimited
Mule Deer Foundation
Pheasants Forever

Quail Forever
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
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