

*** Archery Trade Association *** Boone and Crockett Club *** Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation
*** The Council to Advance Hunting & Shooting Sports *** Delta Waterfowl *** Montana Outfitters &
Guides Association *** Montana Sportsmen for Fish & Wildlife *** Safari Club International *** Mule
Deer Foundation *** Property & Environment Research Center *** Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation ***
Ruffed Grouse Society *** Wild Sheep Foundation ***

Representative Ross Fitzgerald, Chair
MT House Committee on Fish, Wildlife, & Parks
1301 E 6th Ave.
Helena, MT 59601

Re: Sportsman, Landowner, and Outfitter opposition to SB533

Dear Chair Fitzgerald,

We respectfully request that your committee table SB 533. The undersigned organizations represent thousands of Montana sportsmen, landowners, outfitters, and guides. While some of us differ in our reasoning for opposing this bill, we lend our collective opposition to it.

We strongly oppose the repeal of MCA 87-2-525 regarding nonresident college student hunting licenses. This law, passed in the 2021 session and signed by Governor Gianforte, provides an opportunity for students at Montana colleges and universities to hunt and fish while at school at a reasonable cost. Several of our organizations have invested heavily in the recruitment, retention, and reactivation of college-aged hunters, and supported this legislation in 2021 to further reduce the barrier of entry to participate in our way of life. This law has had little impact on the Fish, Wildlife, and Parks Department budget, or on hunter pressure, and is extremely beneficial for new hunters.

Some of our organizations also take issue with the negative impact of the first section of the bill would have on nonresident hunters. Forcing these individuals to select (14) days in which to hunt deer, elk, or antelope would not minimize impacts to the resource, and would unfairly punish nonresident private landowners. This committee has acknowledged several times throughout this session that these individuals contribute to wildlife conservation, and passage of this bill would unwind that work.

Rather than make a rushed attempt to push forward reductions in non-resident licensing, we ask that your committee advance a study bill that would have the Environmental Quality Council examine the issue. Our community has shown a strong commitment to that process, with the explicit aim to reduce conflict while strategically reducing hunting pressure, ensuring FWP remains financially strong, and maintaining our core conservation programs.

We ask that your committee table SB 533 when it comes before you.

Sincerely,

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