



JOEL KLEEFISCH

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 38TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Assembly Bill 411
Relating to: The Mentored Hunting Program
Assembly Committee on Natural Resources and Sporting Heritage

Thank you Chairman Ott and members of the Committee for holding a hearing today on Assembly Bill 411. Assembly Bill 411 will improve Wisconsin's Hunting Mentorship Program and help recruit more hunters to the field.

Today, 38 states have adopted a mentored hunting program. These programs see a significant return on investment, with nearly half of all mentees nationwide continuing to participate in the sport after their mentor experience.

In 2009, Wisconsin enacted its mentored hunting program. The program allows a new hunter to try the sport under the close supervision of an experienced mentor. Since its inception, the program has been a great success. Last year, more than 28,000 new hunters experienced hunting through the mentored hunting program.

Under current law, in order to participate in the mentor program, a minor must be at least 10 years of age. This legislation removes that age requirement, and would allow children of any age to participate in a mentored hunt.

Wisconsin is in the small minority of states that do not allow a parent to decide at what age their son or daughter is ready to begin hunting. Today, 40 states allow parents to make that decision.

Wisconsin's mentorship program also restricts the number of hunting devices allowed during a mentored hunt. This legislation removes that restriction.

Wisconsin is one of only 4 states, out of 39, that restricts the number of hunting devices allowed during a mentored hunt. This restriction is a disincentive for potential mentors, who are forced to choose between acting as a mentor and hunting themselves.

Wisconsin has a long tradition of sporting heritage and we should be leaders in all things outdoors. Unfortunately, we are lagging behind when it comes to mentored hunting, sending families and potential hunters across our borders to participate in a past time Wisconsinites hold so near to their hearts. It is my hope you will see this legislation for what it is, a common sense update to what is, and can continue to be a successful recruiting tool for hunters statewide.

Once again, thank you for your time. If you have any questions or concerns I am happy to address them at this time.



Assembly Committee on Natural Resources and Sporting Heritage AB 411 – Mentored hunting November 17, 2015

Chair Ott and committee members:

AB 411 modifies our mentored hunting law in two ways, it eliminates the 10 year old minimum age requirement and the restriction that only one firearm or bow can be possessed while hunting under the mentored hunting law.

Other provisions of current law would remain in place and, for a quick review, those conditions are:

- A mentor must be within arm's reach of the person for whom he or she is serving as a mentor at all times.
- A person being mentored must have a hunting license.
- A mentor needs to be 18 years of age or older.
- If the person being mentored is under age 18, the mentor must be the parent or guardian of the person for whom he or she is serving as a mentor or is authorized by the parent or guardian to serve as a mentor. This requirement does not apply to a person serving as a mentor for a person who is 18 years of age or older.
- A mentor needs to have completed hunter safety
- A mentor needs to have a current valid hunting approval.
- A mentor can take only one person hunting at a time.

Mentored hunting is a one-on-one opportunity giving first-time hunters a chance to try hunting in a safe situation and it enables veteran hunters to pass on their knowledge and passion for the outdoors.

Since the mentor hunting legislation passed in 2009 WDNR license sale data shows an increase in mentor license sales.



Implementing this legislation would require only minor changes to our licensing system so that mentored licenses could be issued to people younger than age 10.

Thank you for having me here to testify, I would be happy to answer questions you may have.

Assembly Committee on Natural Resources and Sporting Heritage
AB-111 - Mentored Hunting
November 17, 2015

Chairman and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I am pleased to be here and to discuss the proposed legislation with you.

- The proposed legislation would allow a person to be mentored by a licensed hunter who is at least 18 years old and has been licensed for at least 5 years.
- A person who is mentored must have a valid hunting license.
- A mentored license is valid for the same period as the mentor's license.
- If the person being mentored is under the age of 18, the mentor must be the parent or guardian of the person.
- The person being mentored must be at least 10 years old.
- The person being mentored must complete a hunter education course for a mentored license.
- A mentored license is valid for the same period as the mentor's license.
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- A mentored license is valid for the same period as the mentor's license.

Mentored hunting is a safe and effective way to introduce young people to the outdoors and to provide them with the skills and knowledge they need to become licensed hunters.





OPENING THE DOOR TO THE NEXT GENERATION OF AMERICAN HUNTERS

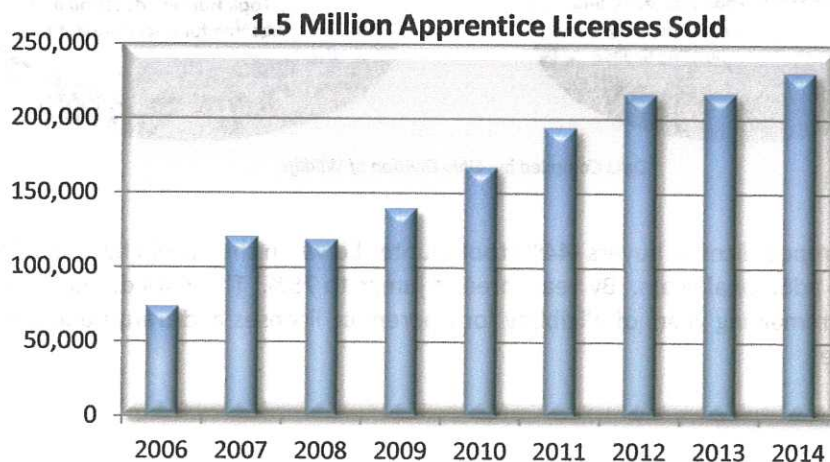
Over the past 30 years, the percentage of Americans hunters has been on a steady decline. This means less money for wildlife management programs and fewer mentors passing along our hunting heritage. In addition, hunters are growing older, and we're running short on time to recruit and retain the next generation of American hunters.

The Families Afield program was established by the Sportsmen's Alliance, the National Shooting Sports Foundation, and the National Wild Turkey Federation in 2005 in an effort to reduce and remove unnecessary barriers that impede the next generation of sportsmen and women from joining our ranks. Along with the National Rifle Association and the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation, Families Afield legislation has been passed in 39 states resulting in 1,480,473 apprentice licenses being sold.

Apprentice Licenses:

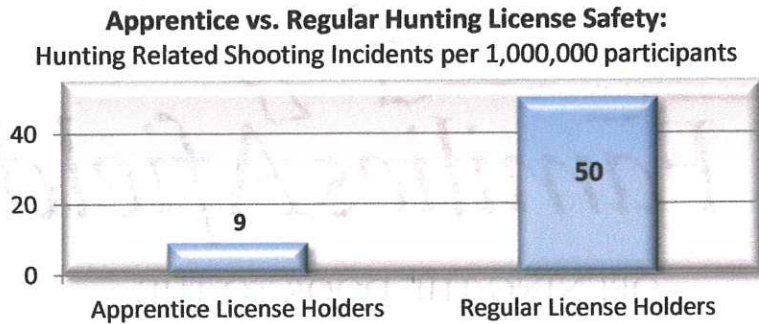
The hallmark of the Families Afield program is the apprentice hunting license (also called "mentored" hunting). The creation of an apprentice hunting license allows a new hunter to safely try hunting under the watchful eye of an experienced adult mentor before completing a hunter education class. Mentors instill safety, ethics, and their passion for the sport in new hunters in a safe setting, while allowing the newcomer the thrill of the hunt.

Apprentice Hunting Creates New Hunters:



Apprentice Hunting Is Safe:

The safest hunter in the woods is the supervised youth hunter. In fact, Apprentice hunting has been shown to be more than 5 times safer than the general hunting population.



* Apprentice Hunting Licenses Survey compiled by Mile Creek Communications.

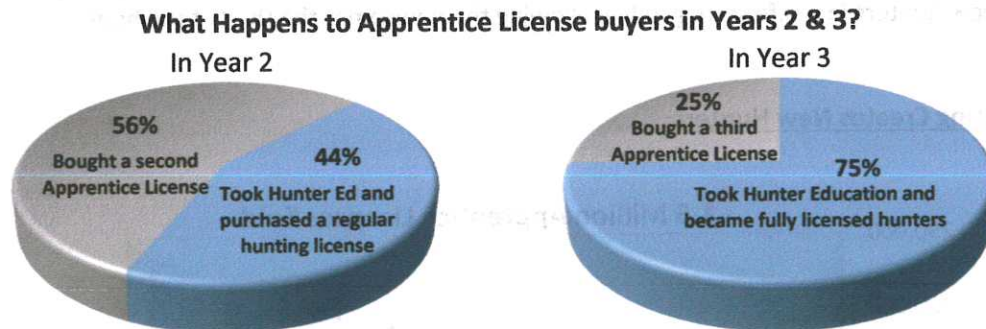
Apprentice Hunting Retains New Hunters:

Data from Ohio's Apprentice Hunting program shows that roughly half (47-52%) of all apprentice license buyers will be retained as hunting license buyers. This mirrors data from the Pennsylvania Game Commission that shows a 55% retention rate for their mentored program. With a 50% retention rate, Families Afield is not only one of the most successful recruitment programs available, it's also one of the most effective *retention* programs available to state wildlife agencies today.

Multi-Year Apprentice Licenses Convert More Hunters:

Apprentice hunting allows new hunters to *try* hunting before spending hours in a hunter education class. This "try-before-you-buy" concept allows mentors to instill safety, ethics, and their passion for the sport in new hunters in a safe setting while they get to experience the thrill of the hunt. *It's important to note that a component of each Families Afield bill is the requirement that prior to becoming a fully licensed hunter a newcomer must pass hunter education.*

Additionally, research from the Ohio Division of Wildlife shows that once Apprentice hunters are hooked, they voluntarily transition to becoming a fully licensed hunter by taking Hunter Education before it's required by law.

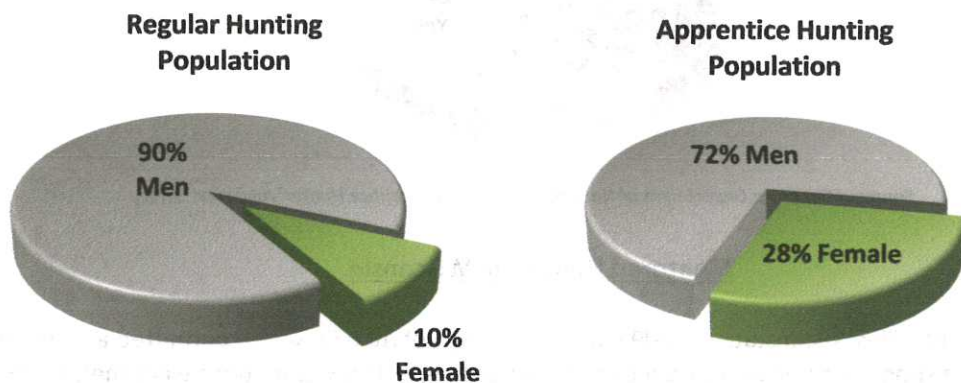


Data Compiled by: Ohio Division of Wildlife

In year two, nearly 1/2 of repeat license buyers (44%) took Hunter Ed when they could have continued to hunt on an apprentice license for two additional years. By year three, it jumps to 75%. This data demonstrates that Apprentice hunters are giving up the remaining years of eligibility for Apprentice licenses and transitioning to Hunter Education and regular hunting licenses.

Apprentice Licenses Successfully Recruit Females to Hunting:

Data from Minnesota details the how Apprentice Licenses do a better job of recruiting females. In that study, nearly 30% of apprentice license buyers were female, a rate 3x greater than the general hunting population.



Data Compiled by: *Minnesota Department of Natural Resources*

Apprentice Licenses Attract Urban Hunters

The future of hunting in America depends on its ability to attract newcomers from the urban and suburban areas of the country. The growth of metropolitan areas has increased their political clout that it is a growing reality that city dwellers will determine future hunting and firearm laws. Data from Minnesota details the success Families Afield has had in recruiting non-traditional hunters from metropolitan areas. The research showed that 42% of apprentice license buyers came from urban locations. Metropolitan hunters account for just 28% of the general hunting population in the state.



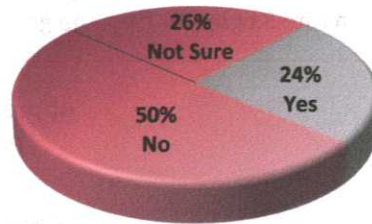
Data Compiled by: *Minnesota Department of Natural Resources*

Would Apprentice Hunters Participate Anyways?

It is true that some individuals would end up hunting if Apprentice licenses were not available; however the vast majority would not. Research from Minnesota makes it clear that without Apprentice hunting to help recruit new hunters, most of those individuals would have not hunted.

In fact, only 24% of Apprentice Hunters responded they would have hunted without the Apprentice license.

Would you have hunted if the Apprentice Program did not exist?



Source: Minnesota Department of Natural Resources - Apprentice Hunter Validation Survey

Mentored Hunting in Wisconsin

Wisconsin became a Families Afield state in 2009 with the passage of AB 672, which permitted a new hunter to try hunting under the supervision of an experienced mentor as long as three conditions were met: 1) the apprentice hunter must be at least 10 year old; 2) the apprentice and the mentor may possess one hunting implement between them; and 3) the apprentice must be within arm's reach of the mentor while hunting. Over time, each of these restrictions have proven to be unnecessary from a safety perspective, and are likely a disincentive for potential mentors and apprentices.

Allowing Parents to Decide

The Families Afield coalition supports the proposed legislation because it will remove yet another barrier that prevents the introduction of hunting to the next generation by removing the references to age for mentored hunting permits. This would allow parents to decide when their sons and daughters are ready to begin hunting. Parents, who care for their children far more than the government, are in a much better position to make this judgment.

Forty states, including Michigan trust parents to make this decision. In Pennsylvania, 49% of the mentored youth licenses sold are for apprentices under the age of ten. Trusting parents has helped to recruit 1.5 million apprentice hunters, while maintaining such an impressive safety record.

Removing a Disincentive for Mentors

Only four states out of 39 restrict the mentor and apprentice to one hunting implement between the two. The remaining thirty-two states allow mentors and parents to decide if the apprentice is ready to begin hunting with a firearm or bow of their own. This unnecessary restriction is a disincentive for potential mentors who have a limited numbers of days during which they may be able to hunt. It makes them choose between being a mentor and hunting themselves.

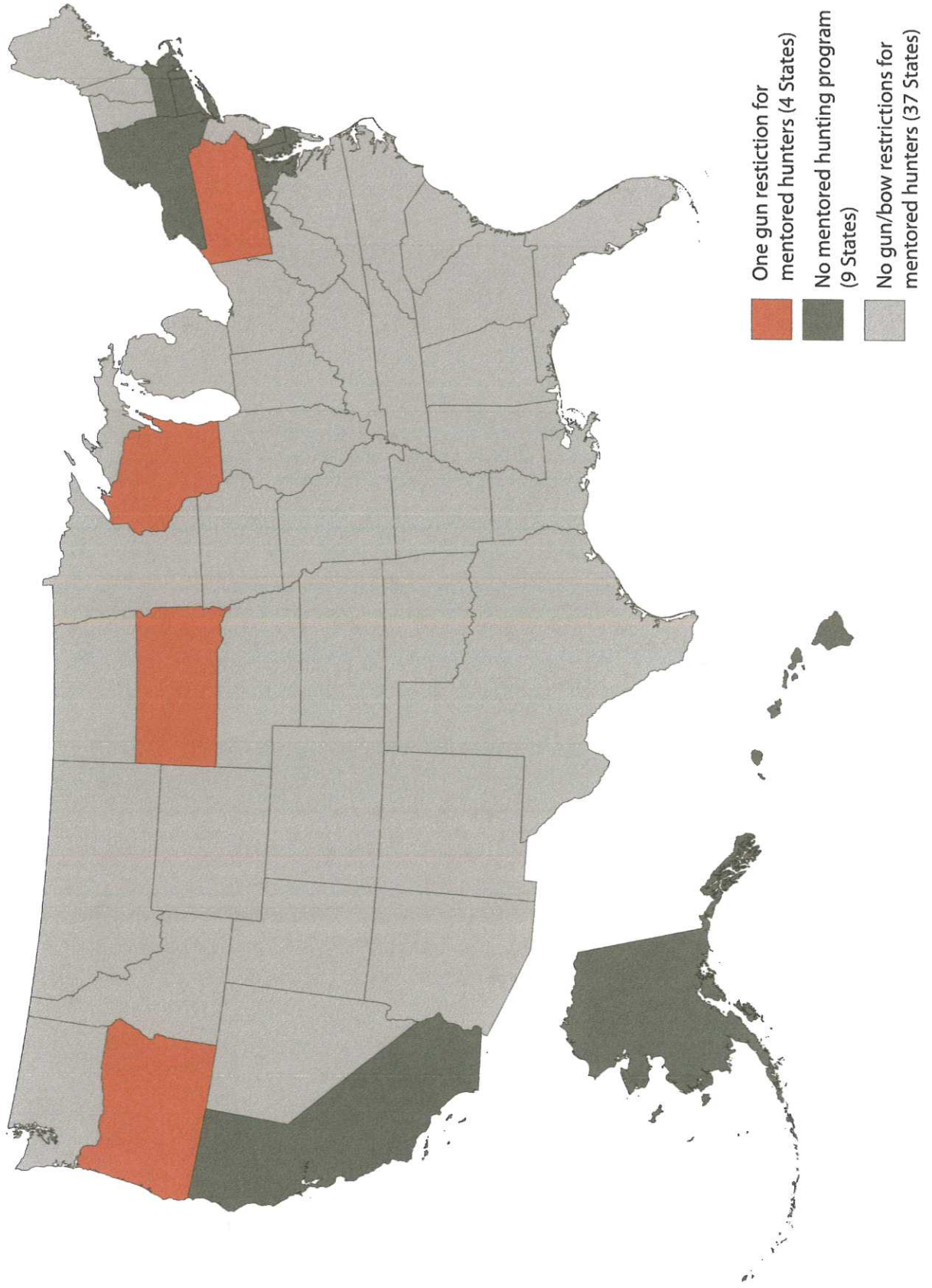
About the Families Afield Program:

Families Afield was established by the *Sportsmen's Alliance*, the *National Shooting Sports Foundation*, and the *National Wild Turkey Federation* in 2004 in an effort to reduce and remove unnecessary barriers that impede the next generation of sportsmen and women from joining our ranks. Along with the *National Rifle Association* and the *Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation*, Families Afield legislation has passed in 39 states resulting in more than 1.5 million apprentice licenses being sold.

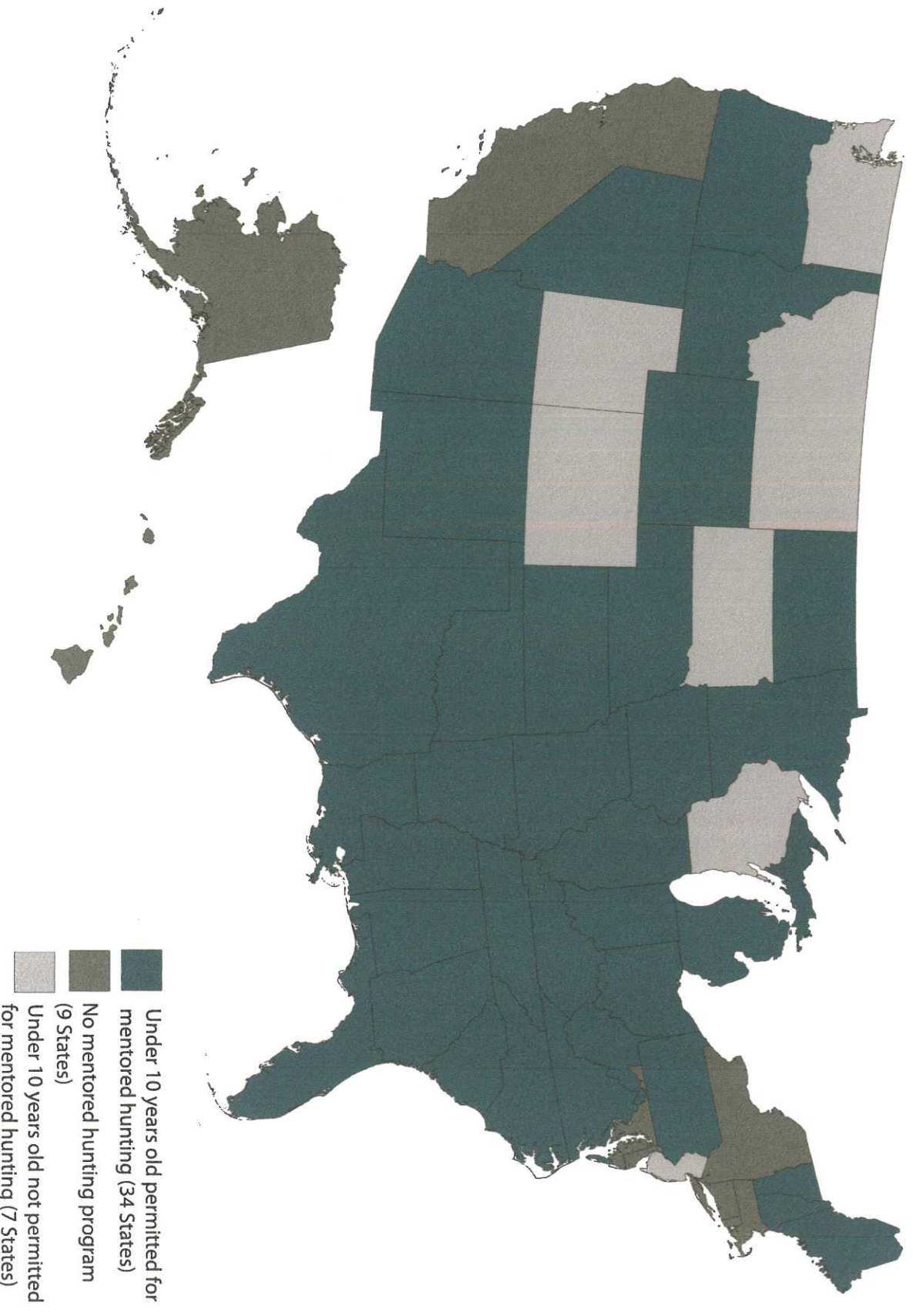
For questions, or more information, contact Evan Heusinkveld at the Sportsmen's Alliance – (614) 888-4868 or at evanh@sportsmensalliance.org.



Mentored Hunting Gun/Bow Regulations



Mentored Hunting States





WISCONSIN HUNTER EDUCATION INSTRUCTOR ASSOCIATION

P.O. Box 24, Stevens Point, WI 54481-0024
<http://www.wheia.com/>

November 13, 2015

Representative Alvin Ott, Chairman, and Committee Members of the
Wisconsin Assembly Natural Resources and Sporting Heritage Committee

Re: 2015 Assembly Bill 411

The Wisconsin Hunter Education Instructor Association (WHEIA) is a professional organization of hunter education instructors. One of our founding goals is to provide a voice for the over 4000 instructors in the state. The instructor association is strongly opposed to the proposed changes in Assembly Bill 411. If the original intent of the proposed legislation was to try and expose more individuals to hunting, we have suggestions for the committee.

The proposed change to allow individuals younger than 10 to hunt and the individual mentoring the new hunter to carry an additional firearm jeopardizes the safety of the new hunter, the mentor, other hunters, and the public.

Our reason for opposing this legislation is based on the basic foundation of hunter safety teaching, "Safety, Ethics, and Responsibility."

Safety - The mentor must be 100% solely focused on the actions of the new hunter, youth or adult. Allowing the mentor to carry a second firearm distracts the mentor from their primary responsibility to concentrate on the actions of the new hunter. The mentor will be focusing on hunting and harvesting game. The mentor must be able to make split second decisions and be able to react. Carrying another firearm slows the mentor's reaction time.

Hunting incidents do occur. The vast majority can be traced back to errors in judgment and violating one of the four rules of hunter safety.

Many hunter safety instructors have personal horror stories where either quick action, or just plain luck and good fortune prevented an injury. New hunters, youth and adult, will make mistakes, erring in their judgement!

We challenge the reasoning to remove the minimum age restriction to hunting. Can that 1 day old to 9 years old differentiate between shoot – don't shoot? Can they differentiate between what is killing versus hunting? Can they rationalize the difference between video games they have been playing and the consequences of the real world?

A hunter safety instructor who participated in a recent Learn to Hunt Program said to me that after his mentee shot two deer, the mentee "... only wanted to go out and shoot more bucks." This instructor was concerned for the future expectations of the mentees, that they can go out and kill deer. It was no longer hunting. With one experience the mentee had become fixated on killing instead of hunting.



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If the removal of the one firearm restriction was felt needed for the personal safety of the mentor, it is probably too dangerous to take a young person hunting for that game animal. There are better ways to address this situation.

Ethics – Hunter ethics. Recently we have all read and listened to in the news the issue relating to hunter ethics with a certain lion in Africa. Hunter ethics is critical to instill in new hunters and to protect the future of hunting.

Removing the age restrictions allows an unethical mentor/hunter to purchase a license, and using an extreme but plausible example a newborn, carry them in the car seat to the hunting blind and harvest two game animals ahead of the other hunters. Should there be a trophy animal in the area, it gives them the unethical hunter a grossly unfair advantage.

This past week in one of my hunter safety classes, a 10 year old bragged to me he took a 40 yard shot with a bow at a deer but didn't hit it. I asked if he could keep 80% of his arrows within the kill zone at that distance. He replied no. He was rebuked for his failure to use ethics, his decision making, and that he is responsible for everything the arrow or bullet does after he fires or releases the arrow. The adult with him was irresponsible for letting him release an arrow.

Responsibility – The dynamics of every hunter safety class is a little different. We see students who are ready and others, in some cases older, that are clearly not ready. Students who after completing an online course are ready and others, who after 6 hours of hands on review are still unable to identify the action, sights, and ammunition. (It turns out one of the parents assisted the student through the on line course.)

Responsibility is a difficult thing to teach. Everyone matures in life to different levels of responsible behavior and decision making. The younger we allow hunting the greater risk of injury or death to another person, or wounding and not harvesting a game animal. New hunters and young hunters have not gone through the experiences in life to develop the skills necessary. It takes time and maturity.

As an instructor and as a parent, we are responsible to pass on skills and knowledge. Along with the ability to make the proper decision, selecting the proper sized firearm is important. This fall, I had a number of smaller 10 – 11 year old students in my safety classes where a youth sized 22 single shot rifle was too large for them. They had difficulties holding it and when it came time to shoot a .243 (Model 7 Remington) and a 30-30 deer rifle (Win Model 94), they refused.

To keep these new hunters in hunting, we as parents need to introduce them when they are both mentally and physically ready. Hunting should not be trying to lug around a 1917 Enfield that is longer than the height of the hunter trying to carry it.

As I mentioned, if the intended goal of this proposed legislation was to remove impediments to hunting and get more people involved in hunting, the Instructor Association has suggestions for the committee.



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The number one suggestion is for the authors of the legislation to work with the Instructor Association, the DNR, and other interested groups to develop practical solutions that consider safety, ethics, and responsibility.

Our second suggestion considers that all new hunters start with the shooting stage, typically the first of five stages. If we wish to promote hunting, we need to promote shooting sports and remove the stigma that shooting sports are bad.

This fall at the end of one of my classes, I asked the students (adults and youth) would they like to do more shooting. Every hand went up! Learning how to shoot, shoot straight and safely becomes more important than hunting! It also fits with the important hunter ethic of being able to make a clean kill with one shot.

I have a young lady in a class that finishes on Nov 16th. She is taking hunter safety so she can participate in her school's trap league/club. Teaching how to shoot, safely, and the responsibility that goes along with that, addresses 3 of the 4 causes of hunting incidents.

In closing, the Association feels it would be irresponsible to pass this legislation as proposed.

We ask that you consider our suggestion to work together.

Sincerely,

Joseph G. Lacenski, President
Wisconsin Hunter Education Instructor Association (WHEIA)



Wisconsin Wildlife Federation

November 17, 2015

Testimony on AB 411---Mentored Hunting Law Changes

Chairman Ott and Members of the Assembly Natural Resources and Sporting Heritage Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation and the 195 hunting, fishing and trapping organizations that we represent throughout the state. The Wildlife Federation is opposed to Assembly Bill 411.

The Federation was a very active supporter in the adoption of the current Hunter Mentoring Law. We strongly supported the lowering of the hunting age to 10 without a hunter education certification in closely mentored hunting situations. The current Hunter Mentoring Law has been a tremendous success, tens of thousands of young men and women have initiated their hunting experience in Wisconsin under the requirements of the current law, which is established to provide a true mentored hunting experience and one that has been extremely safe.

The Federation has a 55 member Board of Directors which overwhelmingly voted against lowering the hunting age below ten years and the removal of the requirement that there only be one firearm during the mentoring experience. In addition we have found very strong support for our position from hunters throughout the State of Wisconsin.

We realize that there are some hunters who favor one or both of the provisions of this bill, however is that the prevailing position of hunters in this state? Most of you as Committee members have often spoken of the need and value of obtaining the input on hunting, fishing and trapping issues from the Conservation Congress Spring Hearings. The supporters of this bill have not introduced these Mentored Hunting Law changes into the Conservation Congress process even though it appears that it is a major change in state law that affects the hunting safety and experience of all hunters. The Federation has spoken with Rob Bohmann, Chair of the Conservation Congress, and he has agreed to place the provisions of AB 411 onto the spring hearing questionnaire. The Federation strongly supports the Conservation Congress process and hope that Committee members respect that process also and accept Chairman Bohmann's offer.

As to the merits of the bill, you have heard from many that have taught thousands of young men and women hunter safety that, based on their high degree of experience there is a relatively small percentage of youth under ten that have the physical, mental and psychological capability to actually discharge a firearm, especially big game, and kill an animal. The point is made by the bill's supporters that, well, let the parents decide. It is true that may well work in some situations but those teaching hunter education see every year, parents that misjudge the ability of their son or daughter to hunt.

Let's put this argument for the bill into a similar public safety context. The age to drive in this state is 16 years old. There are youth below the age of 16 that are capable of driving cars on the highway, especially youth that have been driving farm vehicles from a far younger age. But even though there is a small percentage of youth under the age of 16 that would be capable of safe driving on public roads, the state does not eliminate the driving age and allow the parents of youth to make that decision.

The second provision of the current law being changed by this bill eliminates the requirement that there only be one firearm between the mentor and the youth. That requirement is a key critical component of a true mentoring experience. It focuses the mentor's attention totally on providing the youth the necessary knowledge of hunting skills and lore to insure a quality experience which will develop them into lifetime hunters.

Recently I was hunting out in North Dakota and learned that they lowered their hunting age after Wisconsin did and they reviewed the laws in all other states and adopted the Wisconsin Hunter Mentoring Law as their model, ten years old and with one firearm.

Chairman Ott, Committee Members, you have seen over the past few weeks the strongly differing opinions of many Wisconsin hunters. Please honor your past commitment to the Wisconsin Conservation Congress and have the provisions of this bill placed before all of the sportsmen and women in Wisconsin at the Congress's Spring Hearings.

Thank you for your listening.

Submitted by:

Ralph Fritsch, Chair

Wildlife Committee

Wisconsin Wildlife Federation



Wisconsin Firearm Owners, Ranges,
Clubs and Educators, Inc.

Phone 888-337-3534
www.wisconsinforce.org

November 17, 2015

Assembly Committee on Natural Resources and Sporting Heritage

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Re: Eliminating age requirements for participating in hunting mentorship program and hunting devices authorized to be used under hunting mentorship program. Assembly Bill 411

Hunting is a very safe activity and mentored hunting even more so. Mentored hunting is a great way for new and old hunters to exercise Wisconsin's rich sporting heritage. Children develop the maturity to start this wonderful tradition at different ages. The age of the child being mentored should be left to the person(s) that knows them best -- their parents.

The parents and mentors of the new hunter are also better equipped to decide if the mentor and new hunter should hunt with one or two hunting implements. Restricting mentoring to one implement can greatly diminish opportunities because of the limited days available in the field.

Future generations greatly benefit from mentored hunting. It is our responsibility to remove unnecessary burdens keeping our rich sporting heritage accessible for all.

Wisconsin FORCE enthusiastically supports AB-411. Passing this legislation would greatly serve the citizens of Wisconsin. We encourage you to pass this bill.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Nass", written over a horizontal line.

Jeffrey L. Nass
Executive Director
Wisconsin Firearm Owners,
Ranges, Clubs and Educators, Inc.
Phone 920-687-0505
Email jeff@wisconsinforce.org

DJT

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11/12/15

Reference AB411

To members of the Assembly and Senate; Safari Club Wisconsin chapters want to go on record supporting AB 411 as presented. This bill will transfer responsibility of youth hunters where it belongs, with the parents and guardians of our young hunters. Every young hunter is different in his/her ability to properly and safely handle a firearm under a mentored program. This bill will allow the ones most familiar with the individual to make that decision. We also support removing the restriction on one weapon during a mentored hunt.

Currently, there are 39 states that have a mentored hunting program. Of those states, only four restrict the ability of the mentor to have a weapon as well. While it's easy to envision scenarios of potential problems, We would rather look to those states that currently have no restrictions and see what the history of problems has been. This reminds us of the beginning of handgun hunting for big game in Wisconsin, or even more currently the CCW law most recently passed. There were many that opposed those situations based on speculation and conjecture. We would rather base our decision on facts and evidence. In both the case of Handgun hunting and CCW what major problems if any have occurred? You had the opportunity to look at many states across the country and see the track record . You have that same ability now. Rather than restrict or eliminate a hunting opportunity for both a mentor or a youth based on conjecture, let's look at those 35 states that have no restriction. Certainly if it was not working, or there had been problems, those states would have moved to eliminate the two weapon provision. I don't know of any that have. Is that not a more accurate gauge of the program's effectiveness?

Lastly, we would like to point out the fact that many of our adult hunters have limited opportunities themselves to hunt. By restricting their ability to participate in the mentored hunt, we are eliminating a certain number of mentors that would be willing to do so. This also does not take into consideration the lessons that can be taught to the mentored hunter by watching the mentor harvest game.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter,



Dan Trawick

Lobbyist Safari Club Wisconsin Chapters

Badgerland Chapter, NE Wisconsin Chapter, SE Wisconsin Bow Chapter, and the Wisconsin Chapter.



Let's Acknowledge that Animals, Like Some Human Animals, Love Their Children, Too

Leadership requires a depth of soul and consciousness that is tragically lacking and I have not seen common sense, compassion, and real leadership in the politics of this state, neither Democratic nor Republican, since I returned home in 1993. I have seen no evidence of love.

It is a twisted ideology regressing to the 1850's that has us waging war on our own life support system. It is immoral folly, in the midst of a human caused mass extinction of millions of years of evolution, to accelerate this destruction. Scientists have warned us that we are at tipping points of ecosystem collapse and cannot continue this trajectory.

This legislature actually jokes about causing suffering and death. It is such fun. Thrill killing and trophy killing and torture are the "triumph" of this legislature which has no moral compass. These sham hearings are just show, ignoring science, ignoring reality, ignoring common sense, ignoring the people's will. Power-mongering. Fools' foppery.

Have you no decency? These animals are flesh and bone and spirit just like the human animal. We just saw the trauma caused by the massacre of 129 French citizens. The trauma of killing millions of wild animals in Wisconsin has profound effect on them and all of us. Do you know that the non-human life of the world has no safe haven and no respite from human aggression and cruelty? Natural predators and large mammals are being wiped off this planet...as you orchestrate killing everything wild to "profit" from killing everything tame. It is a death plan for the planet and it is working.

When the legislature made dog-fighting wildlife legal on our public lands, the ONLY concession George Meyers and his band of thugs gave the public was back tags so that citizens could identify trespassers - those drinking, armed men and women on the kill, adrenaline pumping with packs of dogs running ahead of them - dogs TRAINED to be killers. Who is going to want to buy "private" land in this state and pay property taxes when they have no rights to protect themselves or their privacy and safety on that land?

This legislature continues the inequities of privilege to the most deadly few - the hounders, trappers, killers of all that the rest of us moved to this state to enjoy. Did you ever think that BEING with the rest of the life of this state brings us joy? Their suffering MATTERS to us. You have stolen their lives, but our quality of life.

Wisconsin has polled 85% against killing wolves and 95% against running dogs on wildlife, yet the legislature creates a special interest killing committee to accelerate the suffering and destruction of our wildlife and our commons. \$5 license incentives for first time deer killers, trappers, and unlimited hounding at no cost at all.

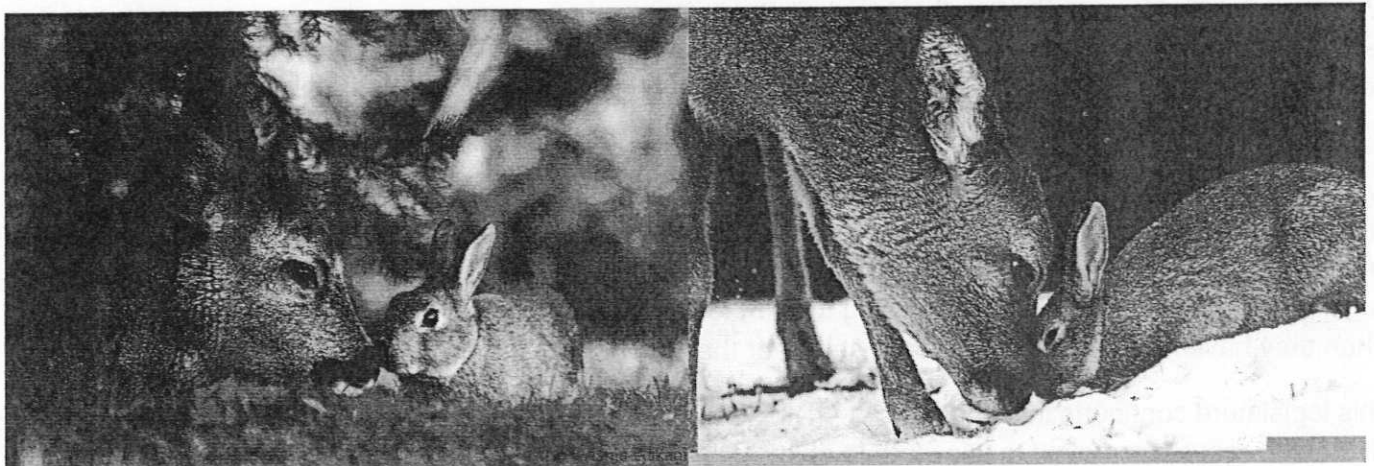
And what do the rest of us have as rights? Since we are not allowed to participate in funding, having a say, or being safe on the public lands we have purchased? Experiencing wildlife safe and visible on the landscape is not possible. 178 wardens for 8 million acres of violence and war on wildlife, unmonitored.

Hunters want children in strollers to kill wildlife. But now you want them from cradle to grave. There are many reasons that children cannot drive until they are 16 and cannot drink or vote until they are 18. There are reasons that children cannot be slave labor. Yet you want to indoctrinate them into being killers of all that is innocent before they are of an age of morality. That is a form of slavery. I do not want to see children who love animals, taught that they are just stuffed animal things to be murdered for your political power.

Children ten years old are too young to have guns and the power to kill. **ALL people, young and old, who take hunter-education must have the balancing requirement to spend equal time in a wildlife rehabilitation facility or a farm sanctuary so they have CHOICE.** Choice is the essence of democracy. Yet your politics are rife with gerrymandering, voter suppression, citizen repression and special interests. Humiliation and disenfranchisement of the majority never works out well in the long run.

This state needs real leadership in a time of violence and very real threats of destroying half of the species on this earth and in the oceans in our lifetime. Do you really not care that violence is systemic in this culture and do you really want to encourage more of it, done by children? No way for citizens to protect themselves? No way to identify the perpetrators of malicious abuse and trespass? You are just deregulating killing so that killers can destroy any creature they want to kill, criminalizing citizen oversight and concerns, on all of our public lands and waterways. That may have worked in the wild west – but there are consequences now. CWD in 25% of the two-year old bucks in Wisconsin. As you have orchestrated trapping 24/7 six-seven months of the year with unlimited torture of our wildlife, wiping out natural mid-range predators like bobcats, foxes, and coyotes – the result is an explosion of the mice population. Farming long term, artificially high deer populations – you have created the perfect storm of severe health risk to our citizens in Lyme disease. Wisconsin is a hotbed of the main hosts of the Lyme disease tick – mice and deer.

It is telling, how the animals even in death, always have more dignity than those that kill them. We are supposed to leave this world a better place. Instead, we are very possibly destroying it for all of life. We deserve our fate but the rest of creation does not deserve a death sentence because we are so damned stupid. Submitted by Patricia Randolph, State Journalist, Capital Times Madravenspeak living wildlife column, Wisconsin Wildlife Ethic, N328 3rd Avenue, Portage, WI 53901 www.wiwildlifetthic.org (November 17, 2015)



Statement of Opposition to AB 411

Good afternoon Chairman Ott and Members of the Natural Resources and Sporting Heritage Committee. I am Tom Thoresen, I have been a Wisconsin resident for over 60 years, an avid hunter for over 48 years. I oppose AB 411 for multiple reasons; 1). It goes against the current mentoring legislation that many of us supported and helped pass. 2). It hurts the perception of hunters and hunting, 3). It compromises and reduces Hunter Safety on two of the important principles that were put in place to enact the current law. One firearm between the mentor and new hunter and the minimum age of 10.

As some background, in 1979 I was hired as a WI Conservation Warden and worked closely with issues related to hunting and safety. In 1984, I was promoted to as a Recreational Safety Warden and helped implement the WI Mandatory Hunter Safety Law in 1985. From 1996 to 2004, I was the Supervisor of Recreational Safety Programs as either the Recreational Safety Section Chief or the Deputy Chief Conservation Warden. When I retired in 2005 after 30 years of State Service, I continued to promote safe and ethical hunting as an active WI DNR Hunter Education Instructor.

I recall several years ago at the Public Hearings to allow those younger than 12 to be mentored, pediatricians and psychologists testifying on the human brain and development concerns for those under 12 being easily distracted. The focus must be placed on the 10 or 11 year old learning to hunt. Besides the professional advice, common sense tells us that if the mentor also has a firearm, their focus will not be on the youth at all times. To quote my fellow Hunter Education Instructor Ray Anderson on this issue, " Our youth must come to appreciate, be coached on the seriousness of using a firearm. Keeping the one on one relationship with one firearm is simply the 'right thing' to do. An example is like other sports- The coach coaches, does not play."

Safety and proper mentoring aren't the only important reasons why the one firearm and the minimum age of ten requirement was passed, so were public perception of hunting and the support of hunters and hunting. If you'll recall, when no age requirement was initially proposed both national and state media ridiculed making fun of hunters showing hunters on a tricycles and carrying a firearm or other portrayals that were not supportive. The image of responsible conservationists is important to hunting and hunters.

The Minimum Age of Ten requirement for mentoring is important, don't go lower than this age. As a Hunter Education Instructors for many years, we notice the younger the student, often the more problems in maturity and problems in safety in handling the firearm we encounter. This is not a good situation for the student, the parents, nor the instructors. As an expert concerned for both safety and hunting, I strongly urge you to reject AB 411.

Thank you.



11/17/2018

Thomas Thoresen
5874 Persimmon Drive
Fitchburg, WI 53711

November 17, 2015

Kevyn Quamme
2764 Vinburn Rd
Sun Prairie, WI 53590

In opposition of AB 411, or any changes to the current Mentor Hunting Program

I've been hunting and shooting for over 48 years.

I am an active Hunters Ed Instructor, Youth Shooting Director at a local Sportsmans' Club. NRA Chief Range Safety Officer, Certified Level 1 Shotgun Coach and have been active working with youth for years.

Lowering the minimum age would include youngsters with varying degrees of ability, desire, physical capability and attention span. I have noticed a large variation in a youth development, and to assume they will all perform at the same, safe level while handling firearms and the challenges of hunting, and conquering the outdoors is unrealistic.

Mentoring an inexperienced hunter also requires undisturbed focus until critical skills are developed. Allowing the mentor to "hunt" for themselves and keep an eye on the young or inexperienced hunter seem counter intuitive to the spirit of the Hunter Mentoring program.

Please leave the Mentoring Law as is, so we can continue the successful program and collect information and develop it properly for the benefit of the participants, and its future.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

2987 Osmundsen Road
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November 16, 2015

Representative Alvin Ott, Chairman, and Committee Members of the
Wisconsin Assembly Natural Resources and Sporting Heritage Committee

Re: Opposition to 2015 Assembly Bill 411

I am opposed to AB 411. The current bill does not take into account the safety factors, maturity of our youth and the serious role of a mentor to be able to provide focused instruction to a youth when hunting with a firearm.

Why One Firearm:

There is a reason why only "one" firearm should be used. All the focus should be on the youth with the firearm. Should the mentor also carry a firearm, it will be a distraction since the mentor has to ensure that they are handling it in a safe and responsible manner. Common sense tells us that if the mentor has a firearm their focus will not be on the youth at all times.

The mentor can educate, demonstrate to the youth before and during a hunt using "one" firearm on how to properly handle the firearm in a safe and controlled manner. This should repeatedly occur prior to and throughout the hunting experience. Our youths are very perceptive. They will know when in a hunting/mentoring situation when they are not the full focus of the mentor. This is not the right message to send to our youth in this potentially dangerous sport.

Our youth must come to appreciate, be coached on the seriousness of using a firearm. Keeping the one on one relationship with one firearm is simply the "right thing" to do. An example is like other sports -- The coach coaches, does not play.

There is no reason that an adult hunter needs to carry a firearm and have the opportunity to shoot game. This is a time in a youth's life when it's their time and their time only. If they miss when they shoot at the game they are hunting, so be it -- that's part of learning.

Why the Age Ten Requirement is Important:

As a Hunter Education Safety instructor I have had the unfortunate experience to witness numerous students age nine, ten and eleven and even twelve lack the maturity and physical build to handle a firearm. As an instructor I cannot refuse to have a parent enroll their child in a hunter safety class due to age. However, I try to counsel parents to have their nine, ten and eleven year old wait until they get older, at least twelve.

Unfortunately, a number of parents have pushed their nine and ten year old into a hunter safety class in which the child is neither mature enough nor strong enough to appreciate all aspects of hunter safety and are not able to safely handle a firearm. Usually the student recognizes they are not ready but proceed because they wish to please their parent(s). It is not uncommon for youths in this age bracket to not pass hunter safety. I've seen how demoralized a child gets when they've failed in front of other students and their parents. It is a sad situation for the child.

Too many children age ten or younger are not ready to hunt. Even though some may be physically able to handle a firearm, they usually lack the maturity to understand why it is so important to not point a firearm at another person and to keep their finger off the trigger until they are ready to shoot; that they must follow the four safety rules at all times. We've had situations in class where nine & ten year olds simply don't have the maturity to handle a firearm. They inadvertently point the firearm at others and instructors. In talking with the parents about these situations they all have agreed that their child was too young, they should have waited. If we run into these situations in hunter safety classes just think about the ramifications when this occurs in the field when the child has yet to take "Hunter Safety."

I implore you to not pass AB 411. If anything, raise the minimum to age limit to twelve or at least age eleven.

Sincerely,



Ray Anderson - Lead Hunter Education Safety Instructor
Eleven Years - Certified Hunter Safety Instructor
Madison Area Safe Hunters Group

- C: George Meyer, Executive Director, Wisconsin Wildlife Federation
Joe Lacenski, President, Wis. Hunter Ed. Instructor Association

November 17, 2015

My Testimony relative to Assembly Bill 411

Chairman Ott and Members of the Assembly Natural Resources and Sporting Heritage Committee, I thank you for this opportunity to weigh in on the proposed changes to Wisconsin's Hunter Mentor Program.

As Chair of the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation's Forests, Parks & Recreation Committee, our committee has taken a good look at these proposed changes and have moved those concerns forward to the Federation's Wildlife Committee which in turn took the matter on to the full WiWF Board Meeting in October. There was good participation at the Board Meeting and from each of these committees who represent a good number of our Affiliate Hunting, Fishing & Trapping Clubs.

I'll move forward to provide background as to why I am opposed to these changes. I have been following this Program from the very beginning. While there were early discussions to use Age "8" as the minimum age for this program, there was also a good amount of pushback from both hunting and Non-Hunting communities before we arrived at Age "10" as an acceptable starting point.. It's my sense that there continues to be a good amount of pushback for Age 8. Also, by every indication I see, Age 10 has been working well.

I also have concerns about moving away from "one weapon between the mentor and the trainee". In my opinion, moving to allow a 2nd weapon in this situation detracts from mentoring nature of the plan. Safety is paramount in mentoring and we need not open the format to a wider form of hunt. The idea is to allow the trainee to have the experience of actually harvesting game.

I'm curious to learn more about why these two changes have moved forward when it appears that we have a viable program that is working as intended. In my mind the real need for improvements in this program would be how to improve the hunt by looking at (A) land access and (B) improved wildlife habitat. The program works best if you can at least see some game during the hunt.

Once again, I thank you for this opportunity to express my concerns.



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