



# TERRY MOULTON



WISCONSIN STATE SENATOR

23<sup>RD</sup> SENATE DISTRICT

**From:** Senator Terry Moulton

**To:** Assembly Committee on Environment and Forestry

**Re:** Testimony on Assembly Bill 649  
**Relating to:** hunting with a high-powered air rifle or an airbow and providing a criminal penalty.

**Date:** January 9, 2018

Mr. Chairman and committee members, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony about Assembly Bill 649, which allows for the use of a high-powered air rifle or an airbow during the firearm hunting season.

Air rifles and air bows are different from your typical firearm or crossbow. Instead of relying on a chemical reaction or the elasticity of a bowstring, these weapons rely on compressed air to fire the arrow or pellet.

Air powered weapons have been around for centuries. Back in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, air guns were often used to hunt deer and wild boar. The air was stored in the butt of the gun and you had to use a hand pump to fill it with air. Meriwether Lewis, of the famous duo Lewis and Clark, bought an air gun to use on their expedition.

Technology has come a long way since then. Air rifles have become easier to operate and accuracy has increased significantly. These rifles are often used on gun ranges, hunting in some states, shooting competitions and even in the Olympics.

The air bow makes it easier for hunters who have limited mobility or strength to load their weapon compared to pulling back a crossbow or bow. Both the air rifle and air bow are quiet, which provides the hunter with the chance for a second shot if the animal has not been spooked. However, using air guns to hunt anything except small game or using an airbow is not allowed in our state.

Assembly Bill 649 simply adds a few new options for hunting during the firearm season. Under this bill, if the Department of Natural Resources opens a season where a firearm can be used for hunting animals, they must also allow for the use of a high-powered air rifle or airbow for hunting during that season as well. The air rifle or airbow must shoot at a speed of 1,000 feet per second if they are to be used for hunting. This bill does not authorize the use of an air rifle or airbow during the archery season.

This bill is supported by the Safari Club and no one is registered against it. Other states that have legalized the use of air guns for hunting whitetail deer and other animals are Alabama, Arizona, Michigan, Missouri, North Carolina, South Carolina, Vermont and Virginia.

Air rifles and airbows are a great addition to the weapons hunters can choose from for their hunting experience. Please vote in favor of Assembly Bill 573. Thank you again for allowing me to submit testimony today.

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## High-powered Air rifle definition concerns

The definition of a 'high-powered air rifle' used in this bill must be re-evaluated in order to better define what should be allowed from an ethical standpoint for the hunting of game as defined under this proposed bill. As worded, this definition would include small caliber .177 break barrel style airguns available from many local retailers. These are NOT designed for for large game hunting at these smaller calibers. .35 caliber or larger big bore should be the minimum for hunting large game in our state.

## High-powered Air rifle definition Recommendation

I would recommend adopting a definition that uses the terminology 'high-powered pre-charged pneumatic weapon'.

The definition for a 'high-powered pre-charged pneumatic weapon' would be as follows - Compressed air powered guns, .35 caliber and higher, charged from an external power source (high pressure air tank, high pressure air compressor or high pressure hand pump) designed to shoot pellets, slugs or air bolts with a minimum muzzle energy of 100 ft/lbs.

## States that allow high powered air guns (pre-charged pneumatic weapons)

Alabama wording for air guns for deer hunting:

*"Air powered guns, .30 caliber or larger."*

<http://www.outdooralabama.com/legal-methods-hunting>

Michigan wording for allowed air rifles for deer hunting:

*".35 caliber or larger air rifle or pistol charged only from an external high-compression power source"*

[http://www.michigan.gov/documents/dnr/hunting\\_and\\_trapping\\_digest\\_461177\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/dnr/hunting_and_trapping_digest_461177_7.pdf)

Missouri Wording for Airgun Hunting for Deer:

*"Air-powered guns, .40 caliber or larger, charged only from an external high compression power source (external hand pump, air tank, or air compressor)"*

<https://huntfish.mdc.mo.gov/hunting-trapping/species/deer/deer-seasons-hours>

Arizona Wording for Airgun Hunting for Bear, Deer, Big Horn Sheep, Antelope:

*"Pre-charged pneumatic weapons .35 caliber or larger,"* R12-4-304Page 125 Sections 1, 2, 3, 5



[www.airgunsarp.com](http://www.airgunsarp.com)

<https://tinyurl.com/wiairguns>

<https://s3.amazonaws.com/azgfd-portal-wordpress/azgfd.wp/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/28135605/mainregs.pdf>

## Airbow Definition concerns

The current definition of the 'Airbow' leaves out many existing pre charged pneumatic air rifles which are capable of using specialty arrows designed for use by Airguns.

## Airbow Definition Recommendation

Includes both weapons originally manufactured to fire an arrow by the expansion of compressed air as well as 'High powered Pre Charged Pneumatic Weapon' which are capable of firing arrows designed for this purpose.

See Air Venturi Airbolt:

<https://www.pyramydair.com/keith-warren-airgun-hunting>

<https://www.pyramydair.com/blog/2016/08/air-venturi-air-bolt-part-1/>

<https://www.pyramydair.com/airbolt-airgun-hunting-35>

See FX Varminter MKII Extreme multi-purpose PCP airgun:

<http://www.fxairguns.com/rifle/the-verminator-mkii-extreme/>

## Big Bore Pre-Charged Pneumatic Weapon Hunting Examples

Videos with Jim Chapman, one of the premiere Airgun Hunting experts:

Hog Hunting with Airbolt: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZH3FBOQK6oY>

White Tail Deer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3EJ86YXkspY>

Keith Warren on hunting with a .50 Cal PCP airgun

White Tail Deer in Canada (18 minute mark): <https://youtu.be/tl5F65ALB3I>

Other Hunting Videos

.357 Big Bore Airgun Whitetail hunt: <https://youtu.be/Qx2u2cqCoK4>

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## **Wisconsin AB 649 Recommendations**

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### **Strongly support the Bill, but needs revision**

- Modern Air rifles are more than capable of hunting large game-but the appropriate weapon must be selected to ensure proper sportsmanship and humane hunting
- Life long airgun enthusiast, started shooting air rifles at the age of 11
- Now a landowner in Walworth County - I want to be able to harvest deer using my Air Rifles, and share the sport with my family and friends

### **Main Concern with the bill is requirements of rifle used**

- 'High Power Air Rifle' should not be defined by velocity (1000 fps is not good measure), as that can be achieved by small, .177 caliber, low-power, pellet guns
  - A better measure is minimum caliber and / or muzzle energy
  - Regulations should require .30 (or .35) caliber at a minimum
  - Follows the lead of several other states for min caliber requirements
  - Minimum muzzle energy should reflect 80 foot-pounds energy (fpe) as a absolute minimum level for humane deer hunting
    - 80 fpe muzzle energy is in line with modern hunting bows
    - Several advocates recommend not less than 100 fpe minimum

**Overall this is a good proposal and should be implemented in Wisconsin**

