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# Ty BODDEN

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 59<sup>TH</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

## Testimony on Assembly Bill 270

### Assembly Committee on Sporting Heritage

Wednesday, November 15, 2023

Thank you, Chairman Pronschinske and members of the Sporting Heritage Committee for the opportunity to testify in favor of Assembly Bill 270. I would also like to thank Senator Duey Stroebel and Representative Mark Born for authoring this bill with me.

This issue was brought to my attention by a constituent who is a pillar within the hunter education system. The primary objective of hunter education is to produce safe, responsible, knowledgeable, and involved hunters. Since its inception, Wisconsin's hunter education program has trained and certified over 1.2 million hunters. The success of the program has rested on the shoulders of the volunteer instructors who continue to train thousands of hunters per year. However, during the COVID-19 pandemic the DNR decided to temporarily end the requirement for those under the age of 18 to participate in a field day training. In the last couple of years the Wisconsin DNR has left our invaluable instructors in the dark.

This legislation codifies current rules and requires the DNR to offer in-person and online hunter education for persons under the age of 18. The legislation also requires persons under the age of 18 to attend an in-person field training session and complete a certification exam following completion of the in-person or online course of instruction.

Furthermore, ensuring that the next generation of Wisconsin hunters is properly educated and trained to handle firearms is essential for preserving our sporting heritage. It is noteworthy that firearm accidents have declined significantly since the hunter safety course requirement was implemented. Without this requirement, we risk more firearm accidents, which could lead to negative publicity for hunters and firearm enthusiasts, thereby impacting public opinion in a day of unfavorable press. This is something outdoorsmen and women do not need to deal with. If we aim to expand and attract more people to these sports, I believe hands-on hunter safety field days will help do that. These opportunities provide individuals who lack family or friends to introduce them to the hunting world with a chance to learn and potentially become future sportsmen and women. This legislation guarantees that our youth are properly trained to handle firearms.

Again, thank you for your time and consideration of this bill. I respectfully ask for your support.



# DUEY STROEBEL

STATE SENATOR • 20<sup>TH</sup> DISTRICT

## Testimony on AB 270

*November 15, 2023*

Thank you Chairman Pronschinske and committee members for holding today's public hearing on Assembly Bill 270. This bill would simply codify in statute the requirement for all hunter education students under the age of 18 to attend an in-person field training session ("field day") in order to receive their hunter education safety certificate. The bill would maintain the option for these students to either complete the traditional, in-person course or an online course prior to attending the field day. The online course with no field day would continue to be offered to adults only.

Since its inception in 1967, Wisconsin's hunter education program has provided training and certification to over 1.2 million hunters. Over the ensuing 56 years, the 10-year average number of hunting incidents has declined by 90 percent. The success of the program can largely be attributed to the tireless efforts of our volunteer instructors who provide training to over 20,000 hunters per year. A number of changes were implemented over the past 15-20 years with the aim of modernizing and broadening the reach of the program. Nevertheless, the commitment to the four pillars of the longstanding method of instruction has remained the same (1. Educate; 2. Demonstrate; 3. Observe; and 4. Congratulate or Correct).

A critical component of the hunter education program for youth hunters in particular is the field training session that follows the classroom or online course of instruction. During the field training session, instructors engage in hands-on instruction and work through a wide-ranging checklist where students are trained and certified in the principles of firearm safety and the appropriate handling of firearms while hunting.

Since 2012, individuals 18 or older have been able to obtain hunter education certification through the completion of an online course with no field day. In its response to COVID-19, the DNR unilaterally decided to extend this offering to individuals below the age of 18 (from October 2020 through March 2022). During this year-and-a-half period, a number of parents, volunteer instructors, and hunting and conservation groups expressed concerns with the abrupt change in policy and the potential for a permanent shift away from hands-on training for youth hunters. This sentiment was reflected in the survey results from the DNR's 2021 and 2022 Spring Hearings, in which 85% of participants (and 93% of respondents) expressed their support for requiring in-person, hands-on safety training for new hunters under the age of 18.

Wisconsin's hunter education program has served as an invaluable resource for aspiring hunters to equip themselves with the necessary foundation of knowledge and skills to carry on our state's rich hunting tradition. Students are of course expected to complement and build off this foundation through additional training and mentored hunting opportunities with experienced adult hunters - whether it be a parent, relative, neighbor or family friend. AB 270 will help to ensure that one of the primary mechanisms for instilling the core principles of safe and responsible hunting in our youth will continue into the future.



**Assembly Committee on Sporting Heritage**  
*2023 Assembly Bill 270*  
*Hunter Education Requirements for Persons Under the Age of 18*  
*November 15, 2023*

Good morning, Chair Pronschinske, and members of the Committee. I am Lieutenant Michael Weber, and I serve as the Hunter Education Administrator for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Division of Public Safety Resource Protection. Thank you for the opportunity to testify, for informational purposes, on Assembly Bill 270, related to hunter education requirements for persons under the age of 18 and granting rule-making authority.

Under current law, the department is required to establish a hunter education program and bow hunter education program. The department is also required to offer an online course of instruction under the hunter education program for persons who are at least 18 years of age. In addition, persons born on or after January 1, 1973, must present one of the following to purchase any hunting license:

- Their Wisconsin hunter education certification.
- Proof of a hunter safety course recognized by the department from another state, province or country (reciprocity).
- A Wisconsin hunting license from a previous year that has the hunter safety number printed on it.
- Proof of successful completion of basic training in the US Armed Forces, Reserves or National Guard.

Since 1967, the department has provided hunter education to our citizens. Presently, the department is assisted by approximately 2500 active volunteer hunter education instructors. The hunter education program strives to provide quality hunter education courses across multiple platforms to ensure inclusiveness of various customer needs. Currently, these course options include the traditional in-person hunter education course, hunter education internet + field day course, and online-only hunter education course (only for those age 18 or older). Currently, the program's established policy only offers traditional and internet + field day courses to students under the age of 18. Both courses require hands on firearm training, with all students required to demonstrate safe firearm handling during a practical/field testing component to obtain certification.

This proposal would require the department to offer in-person and online hunter education for persons under the age of 18. It would also require persons under the age of 18 to attend an in-person field training session and complete a certification exam following completion of the in-person or online course of instruction.

While the hunter education program recognizes the value of hands-on firearm training and the contribution of the volunteer instructors, who have been vital to the program's continued success, it also

recognizes the importance of long-term strategic flexibility for the program to administer services that meets the needs of a diverse customer base now and into the future.

The trend in the number of volunteer instructors, not unlike volunteerism trends in many other community service sectors, continues to decline (approximately 3200 instructors in 2017 to 2500 instructors in 2022: a 22 percent decline. The trend in volunteers has declined 36 percent over the past 10 years) – it is essential that the program maintains flexibility in course option delivery to ensure that customer needs continue to be met in the future where instructor numbers could pose a barrier to additional program demands. The program has recognized this trend and is currently working toward efforts to recruit new instructors, retain current instructors through service recognition and appreciation, along with increasing staffing to conduct courses through limited termed employees (LTEs) and funding external partners through agreements.

Currently, under emergency circumstances, such as during the COVID-19 pandemic, the department transitioned to an all-online certification to allow for continued certifications. This was implemented to maximize safety for participants and volunteer instructors alike on a temporary basis during the pandemic, before ultimately transitioning back to in-person learning in 2021. It's these types of unforeseen events that demonstrate the benefits of flexible statutory programs to allow the Department to adjust—in real time—to the needs of its citizenry and the sporting public.

As a final point, the International Hunter Education Association (IHEA) is affiliated with all 50 state hunter education programs, allowing for reciprocity of hunter education certifications. One unintended consequence of permanently restricting course options for Wisconsin students simply may be the movement of those students to online-only courses in other states, which pursuant to the reciprocity standards, would also be valid in Wisconsin.

On behalf of the Department of Natural Resources, we would like to thank you for your time today. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

## Testimony in Support of Assembly Bill 270

By Thomas Thoresen,

Fitchburg, WI

November 15, 2023

Thank You Representative Pronschinske and Members of the Assembly Sporting Heritage Committee. Thank you to the sponsors and cosponsors especially those of you on the Committee for moving this needed legislation forward. I am Thomas Thoresen and I am here to **ask you all for your support for Assembly Bill 270**. The reason this legislation is needed are: **1. Strengthens public safety, 2. It is strongly supported by both the hunting and non-hunting public 3. It is needed to help keep our Hunting Heritage strong and supported**. Rather than read my testimony I put together for AB 270 and companion Bill SB 265, which I've attached and ask you, your aides to read later, I'd like to speak from my head and heart on an issue Senator Stroebel raised about the DNR Fiscal Estimate at the Senate Hearing and secondly, discuss how Minnesota already has this needed Legislation in place.

Co-sponsor Senator Duey Stroebel was correct when he said at the Senate hearing in August that he had problems with the DNR's Fiscal Estimate on SB265/AB270. I too have a number of concerns as that Fiscal Estimate has a number of accurate, unusual and some glaring missing information. I have the knowledge and experience to state this as I stated in my SB 265 testimony, "On a professional level, I am very knowledgeable about the issues of hunter safety and education as I was hired as a conservation warden in 1979 and promoted to a Law Enforcement Safety Specialist in the DNR South East District in 1984, helping implement the state's mandatory Hunter Education Law that went into effect in 1985. I saw first hand what happens when people, especially youth do not have "hands on" training as I helped in the investigation of a 12 year boy who shot and killed himself in Waukesha County in the fall of 1984 when he didn't follow TABK and accidentally shot himself in the head. I continued to be involved in overseeing the Hunter Education Program as either the Deputy Division Administrator, DNR Law Enforcement Safety Section Chief or Deputy Chief Warden from 1989 to 2005. In those sixteen years as a DNR Senior Manager, I oversaw or participated directly in the write up and review of Legislative Bill Analysis and Fiscal Estimates working closely with Bureau staff as well as Joe Polasek and Erik Thompson in DNR's Management and Budget and Darrell Hintz at the Legislative Fiscal Bureau. In looking at the first page of the Fiscal Estimate it was checked that there was an "Indeterminate Fiscal effect and potential "Increased costs. This may or may not be true but I found it curious suspect in that this bill only codifies what the Hunter Education Program was doing before the pandemic, that being the delivery of a required "hands on" certification program for those under 18. The funding sources boxes checked are good to note as the FED box which is Federal Pittman Robinson funds and the other is SEG.

The background Information contains accurate information about the positions that are funded for the Hunter Education Program mostly out of PR dollars. The FED PR programs gives states flexibility in how, and who runs Hunter Education based on the grant(s). The FE # is correct in that **the vast amount of delivery of in person training is administrated by the department's approximately 2,500 volunteer Hunter Instructors** and that there has been a loss of instructors in the last 10 years but there is no discussion of impacts and costs of those loses of instructors? The other costs that were estimated, which I was surprised to see listed, were to charge costs for existing high level FTE employees who had the Hunter Education program and rulemaking as part of their core duties already. Perhaps the Federal PR Grants are now written so narrowly as to exclude time on rulemaking for HE courses. However, the Law Enforcement Program is eligible for PR funding for time on HE and ranges. In my experience there

was always a substantial overmatch in reimbursable time reflecting that this should not be an issue. The Federal PR Funds have been a huge benefit to the DNR and the hunting public.

The Fiscal Estimate "Ongoing Cost" puts limits on a solution to only hire LTE's to shore up volunteer instructors. The DNR needs to explore all options for PR reimbursable funds. Existing staff's time whether credentialed or non credentialed spent on the HE Program is eligible for reimbursement. It is a matter of assignments, priorities and holding people accountable. DNR needs to look at which positions it funds with the PR Grant and work with the legislature to make sure needed funding being PR or SEG is there.

I mentioned that the state has some flexibility in how they run the Hunter Education Program. One of the best neighboring state examples that addresses this issue that the WI hunting and non-hunting public expects is right next door in Minnesota. Minnesota adopted a mandatory Hunter Education program in 1990, five years after Wisconsin did in 1985. Minnesota has now adopted in the last couple years by administrative rule a "Hands on" training requirement for their young hunters under 16. This was done to be consistent age with the "hands on" training required for their other safety programs. Both WI and MN required a "In class training or the internet class with a field day training for those under 18 before the pandemic. I talked with MN DNR Captain Jon Paurus who administers the MN HE program in August, 2023 and again this Monday and he stated that MN has not significantly loss of volunteer instructors which number around 4,000. During my service with the DNR, Wisconsin also had over 4,000 HE volunteer instructors. These volunteer instructors are one of the proven best ways and most cost effective ways to teach Hunter Education especially in light that the courses are local and effectively assure young hunters know and can demonstrate TABK, muzzle control and other important safety requirements. Why do I say this is cost effective in delivering this important service? If you have 4,000 volunteer instructors averaging 15 hours per year that is close to 37 FTE of work. If you lose 1500 instructors statewide and while individual instructor time may vary, if the average is only 15 hours per year per person that is over 14 FTE of lost direct training and service to the public.

On the Fiscal Estimate Revenue points 1. and 2, The HE reciprocity with other states has existed for some time and Wisconsin may already have a number of students who take the course on-line course in another state. This portion is true. An online only course with no "Hands on" training is not what most parents and guardians want for their children. Most parents want their youngster to really know and demonstrate safety and are comfortable handling a firearm. Many parents won't let their youngster hunt until they have had "hands on" training. This is why "hands on" is so important. Confidence for the young hunter, the parent, and the public that the youth and hunters will be safe. The Fiscal Estimate does not mention another indeterminate revenue issue in that we do not know how many young hunters don't start hunting or parents that don't allow their youngster to take up hunting until they have had a traditional "hands on" course or an on-line course with field day testing as required in Minnesota? Likewise, since access to private lands and places to hunt is important for the future of hunting, it is important for private landowners who do not hunt to have confidence in the level of safety training of hunters. We have heard of and know of landowners who have said they will not let hunters on their land unless they have had "hands on" training and are confident of safe hunters.

The DNR Fiscal Estimate statement on the Long-Range Implications does give that there may be some unknowns with future PR funding and staffing levels. It does not give any mention that the participation rates and support for hunting may depend on the requirement that young hunters be certified by a traditional "hands on" course or an on-line course followed up by a field "hands on" testing as required by Wisconsin before the pandemic and required now in states such as Minnesota. The department

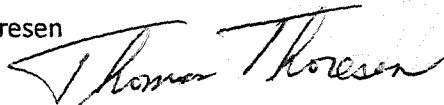
should make sure they also increase volunteer instructors since this is the most cost effective method and provides the local service the public expects for the good of safety and the future of hunting.

Thank you for listening to my comments on why AB 270 should be supported and passed. In addition to the information on public votes on this issue where 93% of those voting at Conservation Spring Hearing supported "hands on training" statewide, (Attachment 1 A ), I am attaching the Conservation Congress votes for Sporting Heritage Committee member's county at the conservation hearings(Attachment 2A). Attachment 3A is WI DNR Hunting Incidents 1944 to 2022. My testimony and materials for SB 265/AB 270 is also attached.

Thank you once again.

Respectfully submitted,

Thomas Thoresen



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### Testimony In Support of Senate Bill 265

By Thomas Thoresen, Fitchburg, WI

August 23, 2023

Thank You Senator Stafsholt and members of the Senate Sporting Heritage Committee. I'm Thomas Thoresen and I'm here to **ask for your support of Senate Bill 265**. I have been a hunter in Wisconsin for over 56 years. On a professional level, I am very knowledgeable about the issues of hunter education as I was hired as a state conservation warden in 1979 and promoted to a Law Enforcement Safety Specialist in the DNR South East District in 1984, helping implement the state's mandatory Hunter Education Law that went into effect in 1985. I continued to be involved in overseeing the Hunter Education Program as either the Deputy Division Administrator, DNR Law Enforcement Safety Section Chief or Deputy Chief Warden 1989 to 2005. After I retired in 2005 with over 30 years of state service, I continued to teach Hunter Education with many of the other dedicated volunteer instructors that are the backbone of Hunter Education. Because we have limited time, I will emphasize three important reasons **to pass SB 265**: 1). The need for **public safety**, 2). The strong **public support** for legislation and 3). The need for a program that both the hunting and the non-hunting public supports to help **continue our Hunting Heritage**.

1). The number one reason to pass SB 265 is the need for **public safety**. Because of the increasing number of hunting accidents occurring in the 1950's and 60's the legislature wisely recognized the need for a statewide Hunter Education program that would help accident reduction. This legislation was assigned to the DNR and the conservation wardens to administer in 1967. Education and enforcement of safety laws continued accident reduction. (See Attachment #1 taken from the 2022 DNR Annual Report). The legislature required mandatory training for those born after Jan. 1 1973 which took effect in 1985. I know the need for the required hands on

training of our youth firsthand. It was in the fall of 1984 only months before mandatory hunter education was required, I along with conservation warden John Lacenski investigated a fatal accident, now called an incident in Waukesha County where a 12 year old boy tragically shot himself while hunting because he didn't follow the basic firearm safety rules taught in class.

2). The second reason to pass this legislation is closely tied to the first reason in that the public knows and understands that hunter education makes a positive difference in both safety and help creating responsible hunters. **The public strongly supports "hands on" training for those under 18.** The issue of requiring "hands on training" for those under 18 has been well vetted with the public, especially hunters, anglers and conservation groups. In 2021 the issue was taken to the WI Spring Conservation Hearings where the resolutions requiring hands on training for those under 18 were overwhelmingly passed in all 29 counties with 92 % of supporting the idea and only 8% opposed. In 2022 the Conservation Congress asked the question of requiring "hands on" safety training for those under 18 be taken up statewide. It again passed in all counties with over a 93% margin supporting for those voting. (See Attachment # 2 from Conservation Congress Spring Hearings 2022) supporting for those voting. In St Croix County the vote in favor was 894 to 66 against or 93% . In Marathon County the vote was 2460 in favor and 197 against or again 93%. In Lincoln County the vote was 1670 in favor, 127 against or 93 % . In Dane County the vote was 5,507 for requiring hands training on for those under 18 and 154 against or 97%. In Rock County the vote was 1118 for and 66 against or 94 % . (See attachments 3 -7) Whether rural, suburban or urban, citizens statewide want this legislation to assure safety and the positive aspects on "Hands on training" for those under 18.

3). The third reason this legislation is needed for our **Hunting Heritage** is again tied to the first two. There are many families who will only let their young son or daughter go hunting only after they have received either a traditional " hands on" class or taken an internet class followed by a "hands on" field training and evaluation day. Parents have told me they are uncomfortable to let their young son or daughter start hunting without this practical knowledge and demonstration of safe firearm practices. The "hands on" training requirement is also very important to non-hunters and landowners as we know there are private landowners who will not give permission to a hunter to hunt on their property unless they have had hands on training. Hunters currently have support of most non hunters because they deem hunting safe and a much needed management tool to have sustainable wildlife populations and provide recreation, economic benefits. Hunters depend on the support of non-hunters and this legislation gives the public reasonable reassurance that a base level of safety training and responsible hunting has been achieved.

Thank you once again for having this public hearing and hearing my testimony. I strongly urge you to support and pass this legislation to assure continued 1.) **Public safety**, 2). Assure that vetted **public support** on legislation is followed up on, and 3). Continue support for our **Hunting Heritage** by both hunters and non-hunters.

Submitted by: Thomas Thoresen

5874 Persimmon Drive, Fitchburg, WI 53711



STATEWIDE QUESTIONS  
CONS. CONGRESS TOTALS #48

ATTACHMENT #2A

No.	Question Description	All Participants			Wisconsin Residents			Counties Tie	WCC Position
		Yes	No	No Opinion	Yes	No	No Opinion		
<b>2022 OVERALL PARTICIPATION</b>		28,176			27,519				
43	Do you support the Conservation Congress working with the Wisconsin legislature to add an exception to ss 167.31(2)(d) to allow the dispatch of legally trapped furbearing animals with a rimfire rifle or handgun within fifty feet of the centerline of any unpaved road?	14331	3039	4868	14111	2948	4745		
44	Do you support a change to the Wisconsin trapping regulations to reduce the period during which the 7 inch size restriction is in place from the opening day of trapping season to the opening day of the wolf season, or November 30, whichever comes first?	7928	4570	9698	7810	4436	9519		
45	Do you support a change in the existing trapping regulation as described above that would exempt disabled trappers from trap placement and setting requirements when trapping bobcats, fishers or otters?	8822	5156	8183	8696	4999	8035		
46	Would you support the Conservation Congress working with the state's legislature and the DNR to establish regulations permitting persons with a valid small game license to use a slingshot to hunt Small Game Mammals (squirrels, rabbits and hares) and unprotected species?	10791	6494	4828	10649	6322	4712		
47	Do you support a population management goal of 350 wolves or less for the state of Wisconsin?	13136	6633	2326	12978	6410	2277		
48	Would you support the Conservation Congress, in an effort to continue the reduction of hunting incidents; work with the NRB and State Legislature to mandate that any new hunter under the age of 18 be required to take an in-person, "hands-on" safety course?	19000	1319	1726	18663	1293	1662		938 OF THOSE VOTING
49	Would you support the Conservation Congress, in an effort to continue the reduction of hunting incidents, work with the NRB and State Legislature to mandate that any new hunter, regardless of age, be required to take an in-person, "hands-on" safety course?	16290	3661	2094	15988	3607	2023		
50	Would you support the Conservation Congress working with the state legislature to allow Purple Heart recipients the right and privilege to hunt bear first, on private land, in both even and odd numbered years?	9785	6234	6006	9659	6069	5871		
51	Would you support waiving the license requirement for an assistant who is helping a person with a disability with the process of fishing, including baiting, casting, retrieving and handling of the fish? The assistant would need to be in direct contact with the person with a disability at all times and the person with the disability would need to have a valid fishing license.	17023	2923	2051	16746	2839	1986		
52	Do you support the conservation Congress work with the DNR and the legislature to develop a Wanton Waste law that will prohibit the waste of game animals in Wisconsin?	14898	2903	4171	14576	2872	4098		
53	Do you support the Conservation Congress work with the DNR and legislature to develop a permitting and regulating process for hunting contests, similar to what they already do for fishing contests?	11557	6369	4006	11282	6284	3940		
54	Do you support the State of Wisconsin identifying funds available to purchase of the remaining 760 acres?	13767	1495	6635	13491	1465	6516		
55	Do you favor the DNR and the NRB working with the Legislature to create a registration system and fee for canoes and kayaks? The system would take into consideration individuals and businesses with multiple canoes and kayaks (camps, rentals, etc).	5219	15013	1634	5092	14813	1536		
56	Do you favor requiring contact information for the owner placed on of canoes and kayaks with no fee associated (similar to the requirements for treestands, traps, and ice shacks)	9737	10000	2129	9559	9854	2028		
57	Do you support having all of Wisconsin's Congressional delegation support the passage of Recovering America's Wildlife Act in this session?	12633	2137	7043	12354	2108	6928		
58	Do you favor the Wisconsin Conservation Congress working with the DNR to change the definition of a muzzleloader for the muzzleloader only deer season?	8447	5331	8005	8307	5265	7788		

94%

		MANITOWOC (36)							
REP. TITZ REP. SORTWELL		All respondents that indicated they reside in the county				All online input of respondents that indicated they recreate in the county.			
No.	Question Description								
COUNTY INPUT		402				1362			
40	To help protect the spawning sized walleye population of Lake Wissota, would you support a 3 bag daily limit with a 14-16" harvest limit, protected slot of 16-24" and one over 24" allowed as part of the daily bag?	178	17	139	Yes	646	75	408	Yes
41	Would you support making Woodman Lake a slow no wake body of water?	136	20	177	Yes	514	124	489	Yes
42	Do you support the Conservation Congress working with the DNR, Legislature, and the NRB to allow passengers on ATV's not designed to transport passengers, for hunting, fishing, trapping, and agricultural activities?	234	60	39	Yes	678	278	171	Yes
43	Do you support the Conservation Congress working with the Wisconsin legislature to add an exception to ss 167.31(2)(d) to allow the dispatch of legally trapped furbearing animals with a rimfire rifle or handgun within fifty feet of the centerline of any unpaved road?	236	30	67	Yes	699	172	255	Yes
44	Do you support a change to the Wisconsin trapping regulations to reduce the period during which the 7 inch size restriction is in place from the opening day of trapping season to the opening day of the wolf season, or November 30, whichever comes first?	149	53	131	Yes	417	246	460	Yes
45	Do you support a change in the existing trapping regulation as described above that would exempt disabled trappers from trap placement and setting requirements when trapping bobcats, fishers or otters?	158	64	111	Yes	446	272	405	Yes
46	Would you support the Conservation Congress working with the state's legislature and the DNR to establish regulations permitting persons with a valid small game license to use a slingshot to hunt Small Game Mammals (squirrels, rabbits and hares) and unprotected species?	164	100	69	Yes	535	329	258	Yes
47	Do you support a population management goal of 350 wolves or less for the state of Wisconsin?	236	67	30	Yes	621	374	126	Yes
48	Would you support the Conservation Congress, in an effort to continue the reduction of hunting incidents, work with the NRB and State Legislature to mandate that any new hunter under the age of 18 be required to take an in-person, "hands-on" safety course?	291	19	22	Yes	961	59	99	Yes
49	Would you support the Conservation Congress, in an effort to continue the reduction of hunting incidents, work with the NRB and State Legislature to mandate that any new hunter, regardless of age, be required to take an in-person, "hands-on" safety course?	243	64	25	Yes	841	172	106	Yes
50	Would you support the Conservation Congress working with the state legislature to allow Purple Heart recipients the right and privilege to hunt bear first, on private land, in both even and odd numbered years?	156	87	88	Yes	442	345	330	Yes
51	Would you support waiving the license requirement for an assistant who is helping a person with a disability with the process of fishing, including baiting, casting, retrieving and handling of the fish? The assistant would need to be in direct contact with the person with a disability at all times and the person with the disability would need to have a valid fishing license.	266	38	27	Yes	836	158	123	Yes
52	Do you support the conservation Congress work with the DNR and the legislature to develop a Wanton Waste law that will prohibit the waste of game animals in Wisconsin?	226	46	59	Yes	759	127	230	Yes
53	Do you support the Conservation Congress work with the DNR and legislature to develop a permitting and regulating process for hunting contests, similar to what they already do for fishing contests?	155	123	53	Yes	617	284	213	Yes
54	Do you support the State of Wisconsin identifying funds available to purchase of the remaining 760 acres?	213	22	96	Yes	747	67	298	Yes
55	Do you favor the DNR and the NRB working with the Legislature to create a registration system and fee for canoes and kayaks? The system would take into consideration individuals and businesses with multiple canoes and kayaks (camps, rentals, etc).	85	219	27	No	253	795	63	No
56	Do you favor requiring contact information for the owner placed on of canoes and kayaks with no fee associated (similar to the requirements for treestands, traps, and ice shacks)	163	139	29	Yes	559	474	78	Yes

94%

95%

REP. BROOKS 95%

OZAUKEE (46)

All respondents that indicated they reside in the county

All online input of respondents that indicated they recreate in the county.

No.	COUNTY INPUT	Question Description	All respondents that indicated they reside in the county				All online input of respondents that indicated they recreate in the county.					
			Yes	No	No Opinion	Maj.	Yes	No	No Opinion	Maj.		
			344						1092			
40		To help protect the spawning sized walleye population of Lake Wissota, would you support a 3 bag daily limit with a 14-16" harvest limit, protected slot of 16-24" and one over 24" allowed as part of the daily bag?	150	7	102	Yes	529	37	314	Yes		
41		Would you support making Woodman Lake a slow no wake body of water?	110	31	118	Yes	430	106	344	Yes		
42		Do you support the Conservation Congress working with the DNR, Legislature, and the NRB to allow passengers on ATV's not designed to transport passengers, for hunting, fishing, trapping, and agricultural activities?	139	72	48	Yes	446	263	171	Yes		
43		Do you support the Conservation Congress working with the Wisconsin legislature to add an exception to ss 167.31(2)(d) to allow the dispatch of legally trapped furbearing animals with a rimfire rifle or handgun within fifty feet of the centerline of any unpaved road?	147	37	75	Yes	473	162	244	Yes		
44		Do you support a change to the Wisconsin trapping regulations to reduce the period during which the 7 inch size restriction is in place from the opening day of trapping season to the opening day of the wolf season, or November 30, whichever comes first?	83	61	115	Yes	279	221	375	Yes		
45		Do you support a change in the existing trapping regulation as described above that would exempt disabled trappers from trap placement and setting requirements when trapping bobcats, fishers or otters?	88	67	104	Yes	316	289	319	Yes		
46		Would you support the Conservation Congress working with the state's legislature and the DNR to establish regulations permitting persons with a valid small game license to use a slingshot to hunt Small Game Mammals (squirrels, rabbits and hares) and unprotected species?	109	84	64	Yes	383	281	208	Yes		
47		Do you support a population management goal of 350 wolves or less for the state of Wisconsin?	130	91	35	Yes	375	372	123	Yes		
48		Would you support the Conservation Congress, in an effort to continue the reduction of hunting incidents, work with the NRB and State Legislature to mandate that any new hunter under the age of 18 be required to take an in-person, "hands-on" safety course?	210	49	26	Yes	753	43	73	Yes	95%	
49		Would you support the Conservation Congress, in an effort to continue the reduction of hunting incidents, work with the NRB and State Legislature to mandate that any new hunter, regardless of age, be required to take an in-person, "hands-on" safety course?	194	34	27	Yes	678	102	89	Yes		
50		Would you support the Conservation Congress working with the state legislature to allow Purple Heart recipients the right and privilege to hunt bear first, on private land, in both even and odd numbered years?	112	69	74	Yes	322	263	283	Yes		
51		Would you support waiving the license requirement for an assistant who is helping a person with a disability with the process of fishing, including baiting, casting, retrieving and handling of the fish? The assistant would need to be in direct contact with the person with a disability at all times and the person with the disability would need to have a valid fishing license.	189	35	31	Yes	659	120	89	Yes		
52		Do you support the conservation Congress work with the DNR and the legislature to develop a Wanton Waste law that will prohibit the waste of game animals in Wisconsin?	172	28	55	Yes	605	102	158	Yes		
53		Do you support the Conservation Congress work with the DNR and legislature to develop a permitting and regulating process for hunting contests, similar to what they already do for fishing contests?	142	65	48	Yes	522	180	162	Yes		
54		Do you support the State of Wisconsin identifying funds available to purchase of the remaining 760 acres?	158	20	75	Yes	582	60	220	Yes		

94%

		ASHLAND (02)							
REP. GREEN 94%		All respondents that indicated they reside in the county				All online input of respondents that indicated they recreate in the county.			
No.	Question Description	240				2157			
COUNTY INPUT									
40	To help protect the spawning sized walleye population of Lake Wissota, would you support a 3 bag daily limit with a 14-16" harvest limit, protected slot of 16-24" and one over 24" allowed as part of the daily bag?	104	11	77	Yes	1088	123	608	Yes
41	Would you support making Woodman Lake a slow no wake body of water?	85	23	84	Yes	801	286	726	Yes
42	Do you support the Conservation Congress working with the DNR, Legislature, and the NRB to allow passengers on ATV's not designed to transport passengers, for hunting, fishing, trapping, and agricultural activities?	132	29	31	Yes	1053	553	206	Yes
43	Do you support the Conservation Congress working with the Wisconsin legislature to add an exception to ss 167.31(2)(d) to allow the dispatch of legally trapped furbearing animals with a rimfire rifle or handgun within fifty feet of the centerline of any unpaved road?	132	22	38	Yes	1133	341	337	Yes
44	Do you support a change to the Wisconsin trapping regulations to reduce the period during which the 7 inch size restriction is in place from the opening day of trapping season to the opening day of the wolf season, or November 30, whichever comes first?	86	44	61	Yes	706	516	586	Yes
45	Do you support a change in the existing trapping regulation as described above that would exempt disabled trappers from trap placement and setting requirements when trapping bobcats, fishers or otters?	95	45	50	Yes	760	574	470	Yes
46	Would you support the Conservation Congress working with the state's legislature and the DNR to establish regulations permitting persons with a valid small game license to use a slingshot to hunt Small Game Mammals (squirrels, rabbits and hares) and unprotected species?	98	51	40	Yes	867	598	335	Yes
47	Do you support a population management goal of 350 wolves or less for the state of Wisconsin?	94	84	11	Yes	864	821	114	Yes
X 48	Would you support the Conservation Congress, in an effort to continue the reduction of hunting incidents, work with the NRB and State Legislature to mandate that any new hunter under the age of 18 be required to take an in-person, "hands-on" safety course?	170	9	9	Yes	1602	105	88	Yes
49	Would you support the Conservation Congress, in an effort to continue the reduction of hunting incidents, work with the NRB and State Legislature to mandate that any new hunter, regardless of age, be required to take an in-person, "hands-on" safety course?	145	27	16	Yes	1385	291	119	Yes
50	Would you support the Conservation Congress working with the state legislature to allow Purple Heart recipients the right and privilege to hunt bear first, on private land, in both even and odd numbered years?	90	50	48	Yes	727	647	420	Yes
51	Would you support waiving the license requirement for an assistant who is helping a person with a disability with the process of fishing, including baiting, casting, retrieving and handling of the fish? The assistant would need to be in direct contact with the person with a disability at all times and the person with the disability would need to have a valid fishing license.	159	21	8	Yes	1414	280	100	Yes
52	Do you support the conservation Congress work with the DNR and the legislature to develop a Wanton Waste law that will prohibit the waste of game animals in Wisconsin?	143	20	25	Yes	1293	258	243	Yes
53	Do you support the Conservation Congress work with the DNR and legislature to develop a permitting and regulating process for hunting contests, similar to what they already do for fishing contests?	118	43	27	Yes	1092	479	222	Yes
54	Do you support the State of Wisconsin identifying funds available to purchase of the remaining 760 acres?	118	14	56	Yes	1300	132	359	Yes
55	Do you favor the DNR and the NRB working with the Legislature to create a registration system and fee for canoes and kayaks? The system would take into consideration individuals and businesses with multiple canoes and kayaks (camps, rentals, etc).	58	110	20	No	494	1178	118	No
56	Do you favor requiring contact information for the owner placed on of canoes and kayaks with no fee associated (similar to the requirements for treestands, traps, and ice shacks)	96	68	24	Yes	827	803	160	Yes

94%

REP. SHELTON 94%

**BROWN (05)**

All respondents that indicated they reside in the county  
All online input of respondents that indicated they recreate in the county.

No.	Question Description	789				1735			
40	To help protect the spawning sized walleye population of Lake Wissota, would you support a 3 bag daily limit with a 14-16" harvest limit, protected slot of 16-24" and one over 24" allowed as part of the daily bag?	307	94	272	Yes	799	94	517	Yes
41	Would you support making Woodman Lake a slow no wake body of water?	236	43	334	Yes	605	141	663	Yes
42	Do you support the Conservation Congress working with the DNR, Legislature, and the NRB to allow passengers on ATV's not designed to transport passengers, for hunting, fishing, trapping, and agricultural activities?	411	120	82	Yes	940	280	189	Yes
43	Do you support the Conservation Congress working with the Wisconsin legislature to add an exception to ss 167.31(2)(d) to allow the dispatch of legally trapped furbearing animals with a rimfire rifle or handgun within fifty feet of the centerline of any unpaved road?	411	60	141	Yes	913	182	313	Yes
44	Do you support a change to the Wisconsin trapping regulations to reduce the period during which the 7 inch size restriction is in place from the opening day of trapping season to the opening day of the wolf season, or November 30, whichever comes first?	231	102	277	Yes	532	259	614	Yes
45	Do you support a change in the existing trapping regulation as described above that would exempt disabled trappers from trap placement and setting requirements when trapping bobcats, fishers or otters?	257	116	236	Yes	563	302	539	Yes
46	Would you support the Conservation Congress working with the state's legislature and the DNR to establish regulations permitting persons with a valid small game license to use a slingshot to hunt Small Game Mammals (squirrels, rabbits and hares) and unprotected species?	313	151	144	Yes	713	370	318	Yes
47	Do you support a population management goal of 350 wolves or less for the state of Wisconsin?	395	138	74	Yes	872	366	160	Yes
48	Would you support the Conservation Congress, in an effort to continue the reduction of hunting incidents, work with the NRB and State Legislature to mandate that any new hunter under the age of 18 be required to take an in-person, "hands-on" safety course?	523	34	50	Yes	1226	76	95	Yes
49	Would you support the Conservation Congress, in an effort to continue the reduction of hunting incidents, work with the NRB and State Legislature to mandate that any new hunter, regardless of age, be required to take an in-person, "hands-on" safety course?	445	100	62	Yes	1063	209	125	Yes
50	Would you support the Conservation Congress working with the state legislature to allow Purple Heart recipients the right and privilege to hunt bear first, on private land, in both even and odd numbered years?	303	143	161	Yes	646	348	402	Yes
51	Would you support waiving the license requirement for an assistant who is helping a person with a disability with the process of fishing, including baiting, casting, retrieving and handling of the fish? The assistant would need to be in direct contact with the person with a disability at all times and the person with the disability would need to have a valid fishing license.	475	69	63	Yes	1092	190	113	Yes
52	Do you support the conservation Congress work with the DNR and the legislature to develop a Wanton Waste law that will prohibit the waste of game animals in Wisconsin?	404	73	129	Yes	943	192	259	Yes
53	Do you support the Conservation Congress work with the DNR and legislature to develop a permitting and regulating process for hunting contests, similar to what they already do for fishing contests?	335	152	117	Yes	777	364	251	Yes
54	Do you support the State of Wisconsin identifying funds available to purchase of the remaining 760 acres?	359	35	207	Yes	879	80	431	Yes
55	Do you favor the DNR and the NRB working with the Legislature to create a registration system and fee for canoes and kayaks? The system would take into consideration individuals and businesses with multiple canoes and kayaks (camps, rentals, etc).	130	425	44	No	319	993	76	No
56	Do you favor requiring contact information for the owner placed on of canoes and kayaks with no fee associated (similar to the requirements for treestands, traps, and ice shacks)	279	269	51	Yes	653	635	100	Yes

\*

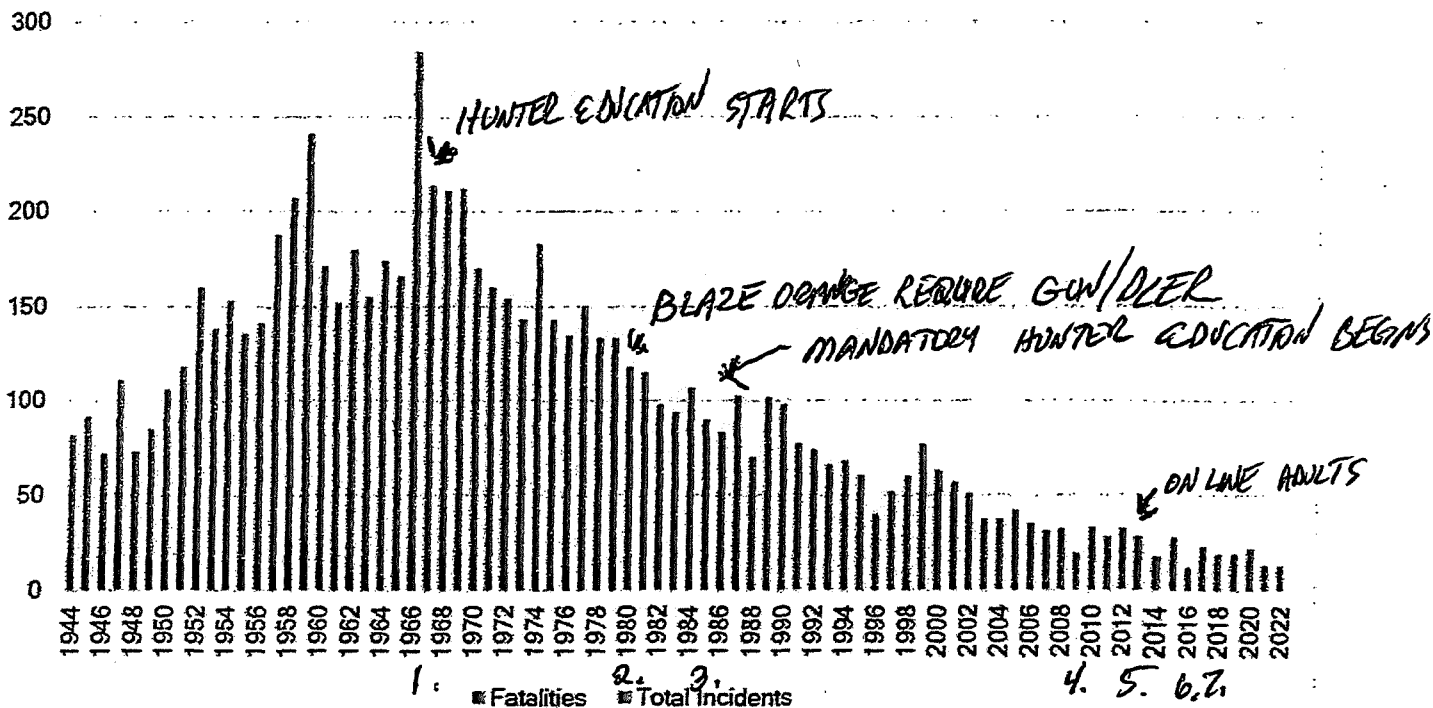
94%

		KENOSHA (30)							
REP. MCGUIRE		All respondents that indicated they reside in the county				All online input of respondents that indicated they recreate in the county.			
No.	Question Description								
COUNTY INPUT		225				707			
40	To help protect the spawning sized walleye population of Lake Wissota, would you support a 3 bag daily limit with a 14-16" harvest limit, protected slot of 16-24" and one over 24" allowed as part of the daily bag?	90	8	76	Yes	322	43	204	Yes
41	Would you support making Woodman Lake a slow no wake body of water?	58	12	104	Yes	258	66	244	Yes
42	Do you support the Conservation Congress working with the DNR, Legislature, and the NRB to allow passengers on ATV's not designed to transport passengers, for hunting, fishing, trapping, and agricultural activities?	114	40	20	Yes	330	137	101	Yes
43	Do you support the Conservation Congress working with the Wisconsin legislature to add an exception to ss 167.31(2)(d) to allow the dispatch of legally trapped furbearing animals with a rimfire rifle or handgun within fifty feet of the centerline of any unpaved road?	117	23	34	Yes	328	84	155	Yes
44	Do you support a change to the Wisconsin trapping regulations to reduce the period during which the 7 inch size restriction is in place from the opening day of trapping season to the opening day of the wolf season, or November 30, whichever comes first?	71	27	76	Yes	198	114	254	Yes
45	Do you support a change in the existing trapping regulation as described above that would exempt disabled trappers from trap placement and setting requirements when trapping bobcats, fishers or otters?	73	35	66	Yes	213	134	219	Yes
46	Would you support the Conservation Congress working with the state's legislature and the DNR to establish regulations permitting persons with a valid small game license to use a slingshot to hunt Small Game Mammals (squirrels, rabbits and hares) and unprotected species?	100	48	24	Yes	269	176	119	Yes
47	Do you support a population management goal of 350 wolves or less for the state of Wisconsin?	102	52	18	Yes	254	224	85	Yes
48	Would you support the Conservation Congress, in an effort to continue the reduction of hunting incidents, work with the NRB and State Legislature to mandate that any new hunter under the age of 18 be required to take an in-person, "hands-on" safety course?	140	13	17	Yes	479	29	53	Yes
49	Would you support the Conservation Congress, in an effort to continue the reduction of hunting incidents, work with the NRB and State Legislature to mandate that any new hunter, regardless of age, be required to take an in-person, "hands-on" safety course?	122	29	19	Yes	418	81	62	Yes
50	Would you support the Conservation Congress working with the state legislature to allow Purple Heart recipients the right and privilege to hunt bear first, on private land, in both even and odd numbered years?	81	47	42	Yes	203	180	178	Yes
51	Would you support waiving the license requirement for an assistant who is helping a person with a disability with the process of fishing, including baiting, casting, retrieving and handling of the fish? The assistant would need to be in direct contact with the person with a disability at all times and the person with the disability would need to have a valid fishing license.	133	24	13	Yes	443	70	48	Yes
52	Do you support the conservation Congress work with the DNR and the legislature to develop a Wanton Waste law that will prohibit the waste of game animals in Wisconsin?	115	27	28	Yes	385	69	106	Yes
53	Do you support the Conservation Congress work with the DNR and legislature to develop a permitting and regulating process for hunting contests, similar to what they already do for fishing contests?	79	63	28	Yes	309	144	107	Yes
54	Do you support the State of Wisconsin identifying funds available to purchase of the remaining 760 acres?	114	7	48	Yes	376	39	142	Yes
55	Do you favor the DNR and the NRB working with the Legislature to create a registration system and fee for canoes and kayaks? The system would take into consideration individuals and businesses with multiple canoes and kayaks (camps, rentals, etc).	36	121	12	No	134	392	30	No
56	Do you favor requiring contact information for the owner placed on of canoes and kayaks with no fee associated (similar to the requirements for treestands, traps, and ice shacks)	78	80	11	No	277	238	41	Yes

\*

SOUELE: WIS. DNR 2022 HUNTER EDUCATION ANNUAL REPORT

Hunting Incidents, 1944-2022



**Important Dates In Wisconsin Hunter Education History**

1. 1967 - Hunter Education Begins
2. 1980 - Mandatory use of Blaze Orange
3. 1985 - Mandatory Hunter Education Begins
4. 2009 - September Mentored Hunting Law Passed. Children ages 10 and up may hunt without hunter education
5. 2012 - Wisconsin ACT 168 - Adult hunter education available in online format
6. 2016 - Wisconsin ACT 131 - Blaze Pink introduced as acceptable alternative to Blaze Orange
7. 2017 - Wisconsin Act 62 erased the requirement that a person be at least 10 years old to hunt under the hunting mentorship program. The act also removed the restriction prohibiting a mentee and a mentor from possessing more than one weapon between them while hunting

**2022 Hunting Incident Summary**

There were 12 hunting incidents, including one fatality, during the 2022 hunting season. Hunting is a safe activity in Wisconsin and continues to be safe, with the number of incidents in 2022 well below the 10-year average of 18.1.

Date: November 15, 2023  
To: Assembly Committee on Financial Institutions and Sporting Heritage  
Subject: Support of 2023 Assembly BILL 270, relating to hunter education requirements under the age of 18

I want to extend my appreciation to the Assembly Committee on Sporting Heritage for providing the opportunity for Bill 270 to be addressed in the public hearing.

My name is Rick Heisler, and I have been a hunter safety instructor for 44 years. With the assistance of a dedicated group of certified and junior WDNR instructors, which I am very proud and grateful to train with, I have assisted in educating around 4,000 students in Hands-On Safety Training. I am also very active working with the youth of our community in several means of sporting opportunities and serve as a director in our local athletic association. I also serve as a member of several nonprofit conservation organizations dedicated to natural resource preservation and education through youth and community involvement. I organized and coached the Campbellsport High School Trap Shooting team and have also had the privileged opportunity to mentor several youth and adults in various species of hunting and shooting of firearms over the past several years. The rewards of these experiences have been very fulfilling and gratifying.

I strongly support Assembly Bill 270 relating to requirements of hunter education students under the age of 18 to attend an in-person field training session and complete a certification exam following completion of the in-person or online course of instruction.

It has been a great pleasure over the years to instruct students in a meaningful, and proven means of safety training. It is truly my opinion there is no substitute for being present with a student and providing them with meaningful and long-lasting experiences. Hands-On Training provides the student the opportunity to self-correct with the guidance and direction of the instructor. While online study provides the basics in knowledge of the subject, students simply learn more effectively when provided the opportunity to experience the subject matter in a natural repetition, rather than being distanced by a computer screen and lack of face-to-face interaction. This especially holds true in training individuals with various types of disabilities. I view the results of training these special individuals in Hands-On Training as a gratifying and rewarding experience which I am very proud to be part of. There is, in my opinion, no substitute in teaching these individuals utilizing the means of Hands-On Training.

Hands-On Training provides the student with the opportunity to safely make mistakes naturally through trial and error. The training we are referring to provides the student with experiences which can be corrected now, rather than in the hunting field or shooting range. Mistakes by the gun handler in the field can result in devastating consequences, which cannot be recalled. The safe practices of the gun handler are vital to their welfare, and that of the environment surrounding them. In life, unlike when video gaming, mistakes and accidents cannot be called back, and the outcomes can certainly be devastating to say the least. Hands-On training can provide the best means to prevent these devastating consequences. The decline in hunting-related accidents over the years has proven this.



Hands-On Training also provides the student with the opportunity to exercise their critical thinking skills and utilize their training when entering the field. Humans naturally learn by making mistakes. Being taught through Hands-On Training can provide them with knowledge and skills which can be utilized in a proper format of meeting challenges without any means of hesitation. If the student can generate confidence in a proper training format, it generates lifelong confidence in firearm-handling experiences.

My experiences over the years training students have been very fulfilling and gratifying. Knowing the student leaves the course with a thorough means of training is an effective accomplishment I am extremely proud of. The positive viewpoints of parents, guardians, and family members over the years who support and enforce the Hands-On means of training is a great satisfaction. The concerns for the welfare of their loved ones, and all surrounding them within the environment are vital with no means of substitution.

Hands-On learning is a rewarding way for students to explore and retain a lifelong learning experience. The importance of them always being conscientious of providing the utmost in safety for themselves, the group they could be hunting with, and the environment surrounding them, is vital.

I want to thank the Assembly Sporting Heritage Committee for the opportunity to voice my concerns and express those of numerous others who have repeatedly voiced their support to me of Hands-On Training being the best means of safety instruction.

I would also like to express my gratitude to Assemblyman Ty Bodden, Senator Duey Strobel, and their staff members for their dedication in supporting a proven and productive means of maintaining a safe environment.

The support of the Assembly Sporting Heritage Committee to secure a proven resource of safety training will be beneficial in safeguarding the wellbeing and integrity of our hunting heritage which WDNR Certified instructors throughout the state continuously strive to uphold.

Respectfully,

Rick Heisler  
PO Box 341, Campbellsport WI 53010  
Certified WDNR Hunter Safety Lead Instructor #12753  
Wisconsin Hunter Safety Coalition Member  
920-948-5712



# WISCONSIN WILDLIFE FEDERATION

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November 15, 2023

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Dear Chair Pronschinske and Sporting Heritage Committee Members:

My name is Cody Kamrowski and I'm the Director of Development and Field Operations for the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation. I first want to thank you for the opportunity to allow the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation to indicate its strong support for Assembly Bill 270 which provides that the Department of Natural Resources shall require new hunters under the age of 18 to attend an in-field training session as a part of the process of obtaining hunter education certification.

The Federation is the state's largest hunting, fishing and trapping organization with a membership of 220 affiliate sports clubs throughout Wisconsin. A large majority of those clubs are involved with Hunter Education training programs as well as hosting in-field training sessions as part of their program. The Wisconsin Hunter Education Instructors Association is one of our highly valued state-wide affiliate members and has been active in this policy making process as well. In addition to our affiliate engagement in hunter education, a large number of the Federation's 55-member Board of Directors are or have been hunter education instructors. There is overwhelming support for in-field training sessions by the Federation's many affiliate clubs and board of directors.

I personally have been a dedicated life-long hunter, outdoor mentor, as well a certified hunter education instructor for 7 years. From my experience as an instructor and mentor, I see the demographic shift where many of the new and aspiring hunters have little or in some cases no exposure handling and using firearms. I happily welcome new hunters with different backgrounds with open arms and I take it upon myself to help train and mentor them. But we as a State need to maintain the highest level of firearm proficiency coming out of our certified program to ensure hunting and hunters are safe and comfortable in their outdoor pursuits.

The Federation would like to especially thank Senator Stroebel and Representative Bodden for being the leading sponsors of the bill as well as the many other Senators and Representatives that have signed on as co-sponsors. We urge the Committee to approve Assembly Bill 270 in the near future and forward it to the full Assembly for a vote.

Thank you again for this opportunity of behalf of the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation

Sincerely yours,

Cody Kamrowski  
Director of Development and Field Operations  
Wisconsin Wildlife Federation



Ryan F. Waldschmidt  
Sheriff

Kevin P. Gaiske  
Chief Deputy

To: 2023 Assembly Committee on Sporting Heritage  
From: Fond du Lac County Sheriff Ryan F. Waldschmidt  
Date: 11-15-2023  
Subject: Support of Assembly Bill 270

Greetings,

Today I appear before this committee as both Fond du Lac County Sheriff Ryan Waldschmidt, as well as Wisconsin resident hunter Ryan Waldschmidt, and I appear before you in support of Assembly Bill 270.

Hunting laws and concepts, safety rules and regulations, ethical practices, and other hunting related topics can effectively be relayed to a student both online or in person, and this bill allows for either option to complete the classroom portion of the course. I myself am a graduate of an in-person Wisconsin Hunter Safety course, and I know many others who have successfully completed both in-person or online programs.

I'm here today to specifically address the portion of the bill that would require attendance of an in-person field training session for those under the age of 18. Laws, rules, concepts, ethical practices...all those things I just mentioned a moment ago can effectively be taught through in person or online instruction. However, the safe handling and firing of a firearm cannot be replicated online. The physical act of handling, pointing, and ultimately pulling the trigger of a firearm comes with tremendous responsibility, and we all know that the consequences of dangerous or reckless handling of a firearm can be deadly. The safest way to prepare our youth for the great responsibility that comes with handling a firearm is through in person instruction by trained and certified hunter safety professionals on a controlled range environment. Some youth will attend range day with plenty of prior experience handling a firearm, and for them, it will be just another day on the range. Others will attend range day and pull the trigger of a firearm for the first time in their life. Some youth are mentored in the field by safety conscious and experienced adult hunters, but some youth, unfortunately, are mentored in the field by unsafe or inexperienced adult hunters. Under any of these circumstances, mandatory attendance at a range day ensures every youth hunter, regardless of experience or mentorship, is educated and vetted by qualified professional instructors who are training a robust and detailed curriculum. This helps ensure our youth hit the woods with the confidence they need to participate in a safe, and if all goes well, successful hunt.

As a 25 year veteran of law enforcement, I've seen first-hand the consequences of reckless handling of a firearm. Requiring a youth hunter to attend one day of range training helps set them up for a lifetime of safe hunting. I strongly encourage this committee promote practices that helps ensure our next generation of Wisconsin hunters hits the woods with some of the best hands-on training they can receive, and I respectfully ask you to join me in support of this bill.

Ryan F. Waldschmidt, Sheriff  
Fond du Lac County

Hi Everyone!

My name is Lindsay Muench. I'm 26 years old and an avid outdoorsman. I currently live in Campbellsport, WI. In my free time when I am not working my full-time job, I enjoy hunting, fishing in our pontoon, playing wheelchair power soccer, watching my sister play softball, and spending time with family.

Growing up there were many uncertainties in my life. When I was 6 months old, I was diagnosed with a genetic neuromuscular disease called Spinal Muscular Atrophy. In short, SMA is a progressive muscle wasting disease similar to ALS. After I was diagnosed, the doctors told my parents I wouldn't live past the age of two (yeah, I've exceeded those expectations just a little bit). Because of the physical limitations of this disease, no one really knew what I might be able to accomplish in life. This uncertainty included hunting.

Both my parents started hunting when they were 12 years old. Some of my fondest childhood memories came from being packed up in the all-terrain stroller and joining them on their hunting adventures. Oh...the flat tires we encountered were fun for sure. I was unable to do physical tasks, unlike most kids my age, but these trips gave me the opportunity to experience the outdoors just like everyone else.

At a young age, I knew I wanted to do whatever it took to get the opportunity to hunt. When the registration came out for the in-person hunter's safety class in my town, I made sure to sign up. Was I nervous at first, oh for sure! I had no clue how the hunter's safety instructors were going to treat me. I wasn't strong enough to hold a gun or pull the trigger, two integral parts of hunting. All my worries were put aside thanks to the wonderful instructors I had, who treated me just like any other kid in the class.

That is why I am here today.

Beyond the fact that I was able to create lifelong friendships, the hands-on field training and in-person courses that I completed played dividends in my life. As a part of the hands-on learning, I was exposed to real world examples that a textbook does not provide. Did I learn what the different parts of the gun were after reading the hunter's safety book? Yes. But did I get the opportunity to demonstrate that I knew how to hold a gun properly from reading a book? Nope! Furthermore, did I truly understand the significance of knowing your target and what's beyond it and in front of it from a textbook? Well sure, I thought I did, but until you get the hands-on exposure and see firsthand how important target awareness is and how the bullets act after being fired, there is no way someone really understands this, especially adolescents.

At the end of my hunter's safety class, I graduated with high honors and was awarded the Ken Stuart Award. This award is given to a student who not only has a high exam score but understands the importance of the heritage of hunting. I was honored to be awarded this title. I had one of the highest exam scores in my class! Most kids would be ecstatic about that alone, but the exam score didn't hold much significance to me in the end. The valuable lessons I learned from hunter's safety were from the hands-on field

training and classroom instruction. Without the field training and classroom instruction, I would have never understood how to be an ethical, safe, and responsible hunter. It is the hunter's responsibility to make ethical decisions for other hunters, themselves, and nature. This is something a textbook never would have taught me.

Before the field training I received, the most responsibility I had was brushing my teeth, as do most young children. In no way was I prepared or mature enough to pass a hunter's safety class without the hands-on learning and instruction. To this day, I fully believe that if an adolescent doesn't experience hands on training in the classroom and in the field, they will miss out on the visual learning and real-world experiences. On top of that, they will never understand the ethical responsibilities they hold as hunters.

Fourteen years ago, I rolled into the Campbellsport Community Center as an eager 12-year-old excited to learn about hunting. What I did not know was that I would use the lessons taught during field training for the rest of my life, in the woods, and in my career. While in the woods, I am vigilant in proper gun handling and ethical hunting. Some of the critical practices I learned in field training I still use to this day include making sure the gun is unloaded after hunting, making sure we are using the proper ammo, and not taking a shot if I don't know what is beyond my target. In my career, as a human resources benefits analyst, I exercise ethical practices day in and day out. I have witnessed how vital hands-on learning is while training co-workers for their role. Without physical trial and error, individuals don't comprehend many tasks. And mind you, these individuals I am training are adults, not adolescents.

In conclusion, as the hunter's safety instructor manual states, "The primary purpose of the safety program is to teach and train beginners to be safe, ethical and responsible in the recreational activity they choose." I fully believe by not requiring adolescents to participate in a hunter's safety in-person field training, we are not fulfilling this goal. I, as a newly appointed hunter's safety volunteer apprentice, civilian, and hunter thank you for listening to my story. It is my hope that after today you recognize the opportunities that hands on training provides to students. The passing of Assembly Bill 270 promotes safe hunting practices to continue this great sport for generations to come. My story could have turned out a lot different had my field training instructors not accepted me and failed to teach me the fine sport of hunting. I had the passion for hunting, and they instilled the ethical and safe aspects of hunting during my hands on training. I am forever grateful for that opportunity.

Thank you for your time.

Lindsay Muench

WI DNR Hunter Safety Volunteer Apprentice

Civilian in favor of Assembly Bill 270

414-659-1464

11-15-2023

## TESTIMONY IN FAVOR OF ASSEMBLY BILL 270

Re: Proposed AB – 270 Hunter Education requirements for persons under the age of 18

In Favor

My name is John J. Plenke, N103W14992 Windsong Cir. E, Germantown, WI 53022

I retired as a DNR Warden in 2010, with 31 plus years of service, 18 of those years as a Recreational Safety Warden (RSW), in the busy Southeast Region of the state. During that time as an RSW I served as a mentor and a trainer of over 700 volunteer Hunter Education instructors in 8 Southeast counties. As part of my outreach duties, I traveled throughout the state to assist in the training of instructors from various locales in the north, including Strum, Antigo, Park Falls, Crivitz, Green Bay and Stevens Point, to communities in the south such as Janesville, Manitowoc, St. Cloud, Saukville and Kenosha.

Developing those relationships with the volunteer Hunter Education Instructors is critical if we expect to provide a service that the public has become accustomed to. These men and women, (and Junior Instructors) give freely of their time and talent to PROPERLY educate our citizens in the safe and responsible use of firearms. We cannot do it without them. They start the young or first time hunter off in the right direction, excited, having basic knowledge about gun handling, aware of hunter responsibility to fellow hunters and the non-hunter, responsibility to landowners and respect and honor to the animals that they hunt. Overall they positively influence the attitude and actions of the new hunters that they teach.

That brings me to where we are at now. In order for programs to succeed you need adequate staffing and funding. The time dedicated to any program, Hunter Education no exception, hinges on the commitment of the organization to devote the needed staff, dollars allocated and a set goals to accomplish your objectives.

Unfortunately the Hunter Education program is grossly understaffed and undercommitted at the present time. This reduction in staffing, over time, and the added implementation of the R3 objectives creates a workload issue for the 5 Outdoor Skills trainers who administer the program in the respective regions, giving them very little time necessary to manage all they are required to do.

The reallocation of available Pittman-Robertson federal funding should be considered to bring the program back up to the level it needs to be.

In 1967, when Wisconsin took over the program from the NRA, it turned into one of the "shining stars" of the DNR. Unfortunately that "star" is not as bright as it once was.

We want to revive the program to what it once was. As chairman of the Wisconsin Hunter Education Coalition our group highly endorses a mandatory "hands-on", in-person training opportunity for youth under 18 years of age. We also endorse a shorter type course to make it more accessible for students to attend and for the volunteers who teach it.

The average traditional course taught now, emphasizes putting the firearms in the student's hands, along with a tree stand safety component, presently averages 13 hours per course, with each course averaging 4-5 sessions long. The internet field day covers all the safety lessons, with a certification exam at the end of it, averages 6-7 hours of in-person hands-on training, typically on a Saturday.

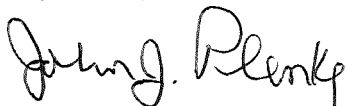
With that being said, the public has opportunities to get their children into a course if they properly plan ahead of time for the course. And if they are unable to they have the option of going the mentored hunting route until they can fit a class offering into their schedule.

In closing, the citizens of Wisconsin have grown accustomed to and expects to have trained and safe hunters in the field, as they partake in Wisconsin's hunting seasons. The over 50 year tradition of a hands-on course is one that we cannot afford to lose, and one that cannot be replaced by looking solely at a computer screen.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak with you today.

I will be happy to entertain any questions you may have of me.

Respectfully submitted.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John J. Plenke". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

John J. Plenke – 262-305-6648

11-15-2023

### TESTIMONY IN FAVOR OF ASSEMBLY BILL 270

My Name is Joseph Lacenski, I live in Plover Wisconsin and teach Hunter Education in Wisconsin Rapids. I have been teaching Hunter Education for over 18 years. I am the Vice President of the Wood County Rifle & Pistol Club in Wisconsin Rapids, a recreational and competitive marksmanship club, and I am the lead instructor for their Hunter Education classes.

- As Lead Instructor, I work with a pool of 15 or more local instructors. We all ... feel very strongly on the need for hands-on training.
- When online instruction first became available, we switched to teach the “short” course format where the students must complete an online course of instruction, before coming into the classroom. We then have 2 evenings and a Saturday morning session to work with the students. We try to provide every class the opportunity to live fire different firearms.
- While we try to cover required topics of Safety, Ethics, and Responsibility. We focus on the Big 3 items which could get a person killed or injured. These are; Firearm Safety, Tree Stand Safety, and Survival. The first two being the highest priority!
- In addition to students from the local area, we’ve had students from Superior, La Crosse, West Salem, Wausau, Madison, and Milwaukee areas attend. Ages range from 8 to 70 years old.
- For the vast majority of students, **this is the only firearm safety class they will receive in their lifetime!**
- The issue of hands-on instruction is not unique to Hunter Education. This past Sunday I had the chance at Hunter Sight-In Days to speak with a Fire Chief who spoke of the problems they are having with new EMT’s/First Responders only receiving online instruction and not hands-on training!
- Since online instruction came out, we encounter parents who have stated ... they refuse to let their son or daughter hunt if the only training available was by online course work.
- We have students who have come back and retaken Hunter Education. The parents,... hunters and marksman themselves,... who were not comfortable with their son or daughters safety skills.



- We also are able to tell through student participation, if the student did the online course work themselves,... or did someone else do it for them! Yes, it can happen ... and I believe it has.
- There are serious concerns as to what the students are retaining from the online course. On Nov 2<sup>nd</sup>, we started a class and a student who completed the online course came in to the classroom ... looked at a break action shotgun and questioned “We get to work with muzzleloaders?”
- From this same class, several parents stated they have already taken their son or daughter out on mentored hunts. The issue ... we observed was the lack of muzzle control, the pointing the firearm at another person! The students had to unlearn the bad habits they already acquired!
- The parents, ... grandparents, ... or mentors are **NOT** teaching the critical safety rules. TAB-K.
- I had to testify in court several years back on a hunting incident in Wood County. A 14 year old hunter was positioned by his parents or adults in a depression, where his shots would go over a rise. A deer ran across the crest of the rise and the youth shot. His bullet struck another hunter over 600 yards away on a different property. That person survived but is disabled. In my opinion, the lesson from Hunter Education class to **NOT** ... shoot over a rise was not practiced by the both the youth and adults who positioned him.
- Referring back to this past Sunday at Sight-In days. I met a young person whom I asked if he took Hunter Education. He replied, yes this past August, an Internet Field Day class. I asked him what the 4- Rules were. Silence! After some prodding and help, he was able to almost get them correct.

THEN, the youth says that in class he was handed a firearm that was passed down from 4 other students when he observed there was a cartridge still in the chamber! None of the previous students notice it. While he pointed it out to the instructor, the teaching point is ... the students in class must be taught the details so they know what to look for! They don't get these details from a computer program!

- In a few days I will be on my farm land in southern Brown County. Every year I hold my breath hoping an accident doesn't occur. For years, there is a group of hunters who do a deer drive by completely surround a small swamp and have a line of youth march through it. Mentally picture a circular firing squad .....

- We have to teach the youth correctly!! I am now encountering the children of parents coming to my classes who I may have taught when I started teaching Hunter Education!
- In closing I wish to say the following....
- The DNR and the Hunter Education Program is rapidly approaching the crisis stage with the retirement of existing instructors **and the lack of recruiting new instructors and instructor groups.** This past week, I heard the other instructor group in Wisconsin Rapids has decided to hang it up. In speaking with their lead person, they strongly feel instruction must be and remain hands-on.
- DNR's Top Leadership must become advocates in promoting the program, hunting, and firearm safety. This includes the need to support the program with internal administrative business functions. We used to see Public Service Announcements. We need them **now** more than ever to communicate the need for Sportsman to become instructors and promote safe hunting.

Currently, instructors come from older generations. Young adults are parents and busy with raising children. College age students are interested in finding a permanent job where ever it takes them. Once they get a job, it may not be in Wisconsin or allow them time to teach.

- There are other issues I could touch on ... but that would stray away from the purpose of this hearing.
- From the instructors I work with and the club, we strongly support hands-on in person training.

Thank you for listening to what I have to say.

Joseph G Lacenski  
401 Hawthorne Ave  
Plover, WI 54467  
715-252-6798  
jglacenski@gmail.com

**Date:** November 15, 2023  
**To:** Assembly Committee on Financial Institutions and Sporting Heritage  
**Subject:** Support of Assembly Bill 270, relating to hunter education requirements under the age of 18

**My name is Taylor Muraski, and I am honored as a representative of the nine junior instructors' part of the Campbellsport Hunters Safety Program in providing our views and opinions regarding Assembly Bill 270. Currently, I am a junior at Campbellsport High School. I want to share our [the junior instructors] collective perspective on the proposed Assembly Bill 270. Each one of us junior instructors has graduated from the traditional class led by lead instructor Rick Heisler. Reflecting on our own experiences, the benefits we derived from the class were immense; however, it was the hands-on training that truly stood out. The ability to physically engage with real firearms under the guidance of experts is something that no online module will ever be able to replicate.**

**Our instructors taught us the various parts of firearms, how to safely use them, transport them, etc. While much of this was explained to us thoroughly during the classroom portion of the class, this hands-on training equipped us with the practical skills and confidence required to venture into the field both responsibly and ethically.**

**Learning how to safely use firearms ensures our own safety, the safety of those around us, and the safety of the environment. Our main goal is to keep the safety of our sport going to the next generation, which is why each of us decided to become junior instructors. We take immense pride in assisting with hands-on training, which we firmly believe is the most effective and positive means of ensuring safe hunting practices.**

**In conclusion, this hands-on course in the traditional classroom is less than twenty hours but holds knowledge and experiences that these students carry for a lifetime of safe hunting. The internet field day providing Hands-On Training is approximately 5 hours. When you place your vote, please think of your own children or grandchildren. Would you want them and the people they are surrounded with to have an interactive hunter safety education taught by experienced hunters, or would you want them taught by a computer? This bill has the potential to shape a future of safe, ethical hunters, and the Campbellsport Junior Instructors greatly urge you to be a part of passing it.**

**We junior instructors would like to express our sincere gratitude for considering this bill, and taking your time to hear what we have to say.**

**The Campbellsport Hunter Safety Junior Instructors are.....**

- **Hudson McCarty**
- **Trenton Schladweiler**
- **Spencer Immel**
- **Brady Butzlaff**
- **Braedan Cerny**
- **Taylor Muraski**
- **Collin Boegel**
- **Elsie Lindsley**
- **Jackson Straub**