



# ROB STAFSHOLT

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**DATE:** December 6, 2023  
**RE:** Testimony on Senate Bill 587  
**TO:** Members of the Committee on Financial Institutions & Sporting Heritage  
**FROM:** Senator Rob Stafsholt

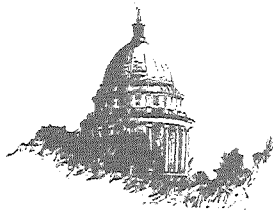
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Thank you fellow members of the Senate Committee on Financial Institutions and Sporting Heritage for hearing Senate Bill 587 relating to defining muzzle-loading firearm for hunting purposes.

Current law does not define “muzzle-loading firearm,” yet refers to it in statute as “any gun other than a rifle, shotgun, or handgun that is a firearm with a solid breech plug attached with threads and capable of being loaded only from the muzzle.” This wording is not only cumbersome and confusing, but it also inadvertently prohibits the use of newer, safer, and more accurate muzzle-loading technology in Wisconsin.

This bill simply defines “muzzle-loading firearm” as “a firearm that shoots a projectile loaded exclusively from the muzzle.” This definition is clear and concise, while also allowing for the use of newer muzzle-loading technology, leading to a safer and more accurate shot by providing consistent powder charge every time and protecting the powder from moisture and the elements. It is also important to note that this technology does not change the functionality or primitive nature of a muzzleloader.

Again, thank you for allowing me to testify on Senate Bill 587. I would be happy to answer any questions, and I would appreciate your support on this piece of legislation.



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# PAUL TITTL

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STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 25<sup>TH</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Senate Committee on Financial Institutions and Sporting Heritage

Senate Bill 587

December 6, 2023

First of all, I appreciate the opportunity to testify before you today concerning Senate Bill 587 relating to: defining muzzle-loading firearm for hunting purposes.

Current Wisconsin law permits hunters to use muzzle-loading firearms. However, as the technology related to muzzle-loading firearms has improved, it's time to modify the current law so hunters can take advantage of these changes.

Current law does not include a definition for "muzzle-loading firearm." However, the administrative rules refer to it as "any gun other than a rifle, shotgun, or handgun that is a firearm with a solid breech plug attached with threads and capable of being loaded only from the muzzle." (NR 10.09 (1) (d))

The wording, "being loaded only from the muzzle" inadvertently excludes the use of newer, safer, and more accurate muzzle-loading technology.

With the newer technology, the bullet is still loaded from the muzzle, but the powder encapsulated charge is loaded from the breech.

The bill simply defines "muzzle-loading firearm" as "a firearm that shoots a projectile loaded exclusively from the muzzle." Therefore, the newer technology, loading the charge from the breech, is permitted.

This changes will enable hunters to use a muzzle-loader that is cleaner, safer and ultimately more reliable than a traditional muzzle-loader. As a result, performance and accuracy are greatly improved.

I want to thank you for your consideration of this bill and the opportunity to testify before you today. I am happy to take any questions you may have.

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## Senate Committee on Financial Institutions and Sporting Heritage

*2023 Senate Bill 587*

*Defining Muzzle-loading Firearm for Hunting Purposes*

*December 6, 2023*

Good morning, Chair Stafsholt, and members of the Committee. My name is Scott Karel, and I am the Wildlife Regulations Policy Specialist for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. Thank you for the opportunity to testify, for informational purposes, on Senate Bill 587, related to defining muzzle-loading firearms for hunting purposes.

Current administrative code states that a firearm may only be used during the muzzleloader firearm deer season if it has a solid breech plug attached with threads and is capable of being loaded only from the muzzle. The department recently promulgated clearing house rule CR 23-025 which, if approved, would remove the requirement that a muzzleloader have a solid breech plug attached with threads. Instead, the only requirement for a muzzleloader is that it must be capable of being loaded only from the muzzle through the use of a ramrod. This is generally consistent with what is being proposed in SB 587. This rule was approved by the Natural Resource Board on October 25, 2023, and by the Governor on November 8, 2023. CR 23-025 was referred to this committee for review on December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2023.

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.



December 5, 2023

Senator Rob Stafsholt  
Room 15 South, State Capitol  
PO Box 7882  
Madison, WI 53707

Dear Chair Stafsholt and Honorable Members of the Financial Institutions & Sporting Heritage Committee:

On behalf of Safari Club International (SCI), I write in support of Senate Bill 587 which would update the language for defining a muzzle-loading firearm used for hunting in the state.

SCI is dedicated to protecting the freedom to hunt and promoting wildlife conservation worldwide. Our members, in Wisconsin and beyond, are dedicated conservationists who understand the importance and impact of updating state regulations in accordance with technological advances where appropriate to allow for a safer and more accessible user experience while afield.

Senate Bill 587 would allow for the use of encapsulated propellant charges for muzzleloading firearms in Wisconsin. Similar to other technological advances, encapsulated propellant charge for muzzleloaders is an advancement that increases the safety, reliability and access for hunting – specifically hunting with muzzleloaders in this instance. Like any other traditional muzzleloader, the sabot projectile is loaded via a ramrod into the barrel of a muzzleloader while an encapsulated powder charge is placed at the breach followed by the primer being inserted into encapsulated powder charge. This allows for an exact powder charge and completely waterproof design which ensures a more consistent, accurate and safe experience with muzzleloaders. Additionally, the ability to recognize the muzzleloader being loaded and then de-charged as needed becomes much simpler and safer by this type of design – which is still primitive by nature. Encapsulated propellant charges are currently legal in 27 states during muzzleloader season.

Thank you for your efforts to implement an accessible and safe user experience for hunters using muzzleloaders in Wisconsin. SCI supports Senate Bill 587 and is grateful for the opportunity to provide comments.

Sincerely,

W. Laird Hamberlin  
CEO – Safari Club International/Foundation



**CHRISTOPHER LEE**

Director, Government Relations - State Affairs

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December 6, 2023

Chairman Stafsholt and Members of the Wisconsin Senate Committee on Financial Institutions and Sporting Heritage:

I write on behalf of the members of the National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF) – The Firearm Industry Trade Association in support of Senate Bill 587, a bill to update the definition of “muzzle-loading firearm” for hunting purposes. NSSF represents over 10,000 member companies in the firearm industry across the United States. According to most recent data, our industry employs over 8,000 Wisconsinites and in 2022, it had an impact of over \$1.7 billion in the state.

NSSF has been involved in recruitment, retention, and reactivation (R3) efforts for years. Today, NSSF leads R3 initiatives that include National Shooting Sports Month, +One, First Shots, #LetsGoShooting, and #LetsGoHunting, just to name a few. NSSF regularly partners with NGO’s, government wildlife agencies, and wildlife organizations on other R3 projects.

As we work to recruit more hunters, it is important that hunting be as accessible as possible. As hunting technology evolves, it is important for hunting regulations to be updated. One example of this innovation is the encapsulated propellant charge for muzzleloaders. This bill would allow for the encapsulated propellant charge to be used for muzzleloader season in Wisconsin. The sabot projectile is loaded into the barrel through the muzzle using a ramrod. The encapsulated powder charge is placed into the breech and a 209 primer is inserted into the capsule.

This encapsulated propellant charge is already legal for muzzleloading seasons in 27 states because it has multiple benefits. It makes hunting with muzzleloaders more safe and more reliable by ensuring a consistent powder charge. It protects the powder from moisture and the elements. Finally, it is more user-friendly for new and youth hunters. It is important to note that this does not change the functionality or primitive nature of the muzzleloader.

For NSSF’s R3 efforts as defined above, it is important that hunting be as accessible as possible and technology like the encapsulated propellant charge helps with that access. We urge your support of Senate Bill 587 and thank you for your time.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Christopher M. Lee". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "C".

Christopher Lee



**Attn:** Senate Committee on Financial Institutions and Sporting Heritage  
**Re:** SB 587 – Muzzleloader Definition  
**Position:** Support  
**Date:** December 5, 2023

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Honorable Members of the Senate Committee on Financial Institutions and Sporting Heritage,

I write you today on behalf of the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation (CSF) to express support for Senate Bill 587, which would include breech-charging muzzleloaders within Wisconsin's muzzleloader definition. Joining the majority of states in allowing modern muzzleloader technologies to be used during blackpowder hunting season expands hunting accessibility while honoring the State's longstanding outdoor traditions. I respectfully request that the members of this Committee support the passage of SB 587.

Founded in 1989, the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation is the informed authority across outdoor issues and serves as the primary conduit for influencing public policy. Working with the Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus (CSC), the Governors Sportsmen's Caucus (GSC), and the National Assembly of Sportsmen's Caucuses (NASC), CSF gives a voice to hunters, anglers, recreational shooters, and trappers on Capitol Hill and throughout state capitols advocating on vital outdoor issues that are the backbone of our nation's conservation legacy.

SB 587 would allow hunters to use new breech-charging muzzleloader products that are safe and reliable while not changing the existing characteristics of blackpowder firearms seasons. These new products still require the projectile to be loaded through the muzzle, they still only accept one projectile at a time, and they have a similar effective range to muzzleloaders that are presently authorized for use. These products also eliminate a potential cause of inconsistency in presently authorized muzzleloaders – user-caused variances in powder loads. Eliminating this variable would enhance the consistency and repeatability of muzzleloaders afield while simultaneously reducing risk of injury to the user caused by overloading or double-charging the propellant.

Hunting, a staple of society in Wisconsin, plays an invaluable role in the management of the State's storied natural resources. Expanding the accessibility of muzzleloaders serves to enhance the recruitment, retention, and reactivation of Wisconsin sportsmen and women, thereby furthering conservation efforts in the Badger State. I respectfully request that you support the passage of this important legislation.

Sincerely,

**Robert Matthews**  
Senior Coordinator, Great Lakes States  
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation  
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