

SB 0847 Repealing 10:30 time restriction in Dorchester County

Joyce and Wayne Bell, Talbot County, MD

Position: **OPPOSE**

Dear Senator Feldman and Members of the Senate Committee on Education, Energy, and the Environment:

By passing this bill you will infringe on the ability of the non-hunting residents in Dorchester County to enjoy the outdoors – and that’s a big number since only 2.5% of Marylanders are hunters. On the other hand, 83% of the population in Maryland are “wildlife watchers” according to the 2016 US Fish and Wildlife census report, which also states that wildlife watchers spend 3 times more money than hunters.

My husband is an avid birdwatcher and a member of one the 15 local chapters of the MD Ornithological Society. Weekly bird walks are scheduled for most every Sunday. Scouts, dogwalkers, trail riders-- all look forward to Sundays for outings to avoid confrontations with hunters who might be in the woods on the other 6 days of the week.

Doctors in 34 states are praising the health benefits of getting outside in nature – handing out “green prescriptions”. Hunting discourages outdoor activities at a time when we need them the most.

I am a member of Tuckahoe Equestrian Center, a trail riding non-profit, which borders Caroline and Queen Anne’s Counties and has a current membership of 414 individuals. We especially like to ride in the fall when it is cool and bugs are no longer an issue. Just as my home is surrounded on 3 sides by hunted property, so is Tuckahoe State Park. It is unnerving and can be dangerous to ride close to areas where hunting might be going on. Many of my horse friends have recounted incidents with hunters, so we often just stay out of the woods. In 2014 a biker was shot in Tuckahoe State Park. In 2016 an 87 year old man was struck in the head by a bullet while walking in his own backyard which adjoined Patuxant River Park. In 2019 a woman was shooting a groundhog in her back yard and grazed a man’s shoulder – he was walking in a park which bordered her land. None of these incidents were reported by DNR, but were reported in newspapers or on TV (please see attached).

Many horse owners do not have horse trailers and must rely on a network of private trails that traverse their farms to ride. However, whether on private land or in a park, Sunday is the only day we can be sure that there isn’t a hunter hiding in a tree stand out of sight.

Since a statewide poll in 2018 showed that 68.9% of all Marylanders opposed Sunday hunting while only 21.9% favor it, **it is clear that this bill should be defeated.**

Author: Scott Broom

Published: 6:07 PM EDT October 24, 2016

Updated: 7:18 PM EDT October 24, 2016

The mystery is still not solved after an 87-year old man was apparently struck (ed. note: in the head) by a shotgun pellet or bullet fragment while walking on his property in rural Montgomery County Saturday.

Authorities suspect a hunting accident, but they don't know who fired the shot or from where.

Residents and hunters say they are deeply concerned by the incident.

The victim's property is on the boundary of the Patuxent River State Park where hunting with firearms is permitted.

Hunters may not fire guns within 150 yards of an occupied dwelling without a residents' permission, even if the hunter is on another property or public land nearby.

Maryland averages 2-3 hunting accidents involving firearms annually. The victim is almost always a hunter. The last bystander to be injured was a mountain biker who was peppered by bird shot while riding in the Tuckahoe State Park on Maryland's Eastern Shore in 2014.

Currently in Maryland, hunters may venture afield with shotguns to pursue small game or hunt deer using muzzle-loading rifles, which are frequently modern versions of antique weapons.

The season for hunting deer with modern firearms begins November 26 and goes through December 10. Hunters may only use shotguns in the county, which have a dramatically limited range compared to rifles.

The majority of Montgomery County is off-limits to firearms hunting with the exception of the outermost rural areas.

NOTE: see more of this episode at:

<https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.wusa9.com/amp/article/news/local/mystery-surrounds-shooting-of-elderly-md-man-walking-home/65-340868641>