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I am writing in opposition to SB 0634. This bill would significantly increase the cost of hunting in the state of Maryland. Non lead ammunition is 3-4 times the cost of lead ammunition. Lets also not forget HB 937 that is looking to raise the sales tax on ammunition from 6% to 12%. At the time of this writing a box of 45-70(a popular straight wall cartridge that is used in the straight wall only portion of region B for deer season) barnes copper ammunition is 65.99 at midwayusa.com. Add to that 12% sales tax and that is 73.91 for a box of 20 rounds. That is 3.70 for each round minus shipping, if ordering only 1 box that would be an additional 1.00 per round. Sighting in a rifle for deer season is going to be a significant financial burden for every hunter because the cooper ammunition would have to be used for sighting in to ensure accuracy in the field. Sighting in a rifle and becoming proficient with a new ammunition type could take some people several boxes if ammunition. Contrast that to Nosler whitetail country copper played lead ammunition at 37.99 for a box of 20 at midwayusa.com There is also a very big problem with availability in calibers/gauges. Not every caliber/gauge has non lead ammunition available for it. This would force hunters to buy new firearms to continue hunting in Maryland. Even calibers that have lead free ammo made for them face steep shortages in supply every year. New firearms are also very expensive. This would also cause many hunters to no longer be able to use firearms passed down from generations.

A lot of the science behind lead being in carcasses and in turn being ingested by animals is flawed. Carcasses are very seldom left in the field. When an animal is harvested the animal is removed from the field for processing. Occasionally an animal is not able to be recovered, this accounts for such a small number of animals it would be hard to believe lead ingestion from these few carcasses would be statistically significant. This bill would make hunting small game super expensive and give hunters relatively few options for grain weights and bullet types. For large game the selection is a little broader but not much. This will severely limit hunters ability to match grain weight and bullet style to their firearm to give them the most accurate combination. This will result in a lot of hunters having to sacrifice accuracy to confirm to this bill should it become law. The result of sacrificing accuracy will result in more wounded/non recovered animals and lower harvest numbers creating population management problems for the Department of Natural Resources when below quota numbers of animals are harvested. When a bullet is made from a non lead metal, for rifles the most common is copper, the bullet has to be made longer and of different shape to maintain an acceptable grain weight to keep similar terminal ballistics. This lengthening and reshaping makes some rifles useless with non lead ammunition as it requires a different twist in the rifling of the barrel to stabilize the bullet for accuracy. A bullet that is not stabilized from the rifling is wildly inaccurate and can not safely be used for even target shooting. Most older rifles like the ones most hunters use do not have rifles with a rate of twist that is correct for longer non lead ammunition.

This bill will do nothing but marginalize the hunters of Maryland forcing many of them out of the activity due to economics of the non lead requirement/need to purchase new equipment to comply. This same legislative session the general assembly is also looking to pass HB 1253 creating a maryland department of social equity. SB 0634 is not creating social equity. This is blatant discrimination to a population of citizens in the state of Maryland and I strongly urge the committee to vote unfavorably for SB 0634 and not let it pass committee.

Thank you,


Chuck Knaggs