

SB-0449_WMSC_kelkye_FAV_2025.pdf

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February 28, 2025

Honorable Members of the
Maryland Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee
Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Md. 21401

**Subject: SB-0449 Frederick and Washington Counties – Bow Hunting – Openly
Carrying Handguns
SUPPORT**

Dear Honorable Senators:

I represent the Western Maryland Sportsmen's Coalition, Inc. The Coalition is comprised of many hunting clubs and sportsmen's associations and thousands of their individual members living in Garrett, Allegany, Washington, Frederick, and Carroll Counties. As President of the Coalition, I work together with the leadership of these Western Maryland Sportsmen's organizations for the recognition and benefit of the sportsmen and sportswomen of the five most western counties of Maryland.

On March 4, 2025, the Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee will be hearing the advantages and disadvantages of **SB-0449 (Frederick and Washington Counties – Bow Hunting – Openly Carrying Handguns)**:

I, as a private citizen of this state and as the elected representative of the Western Maryland Sportsmen's Coalition, Inc. **strongly urge you to support and vote favorable on this bill.**

The western counties of Maryland sustain the state's highest concentration of black bears. Over the past decade, the black bear population in this region has been steadily increasing. Along with this population growth, the encounters between deer bow hunters and black bears have increased dramatically. More and more often bow hunters report harrowing experiences of black bears, sometimes climbing the same tree that the hunter in his/her tree stand is occupying. In addition to dangerous wildlife, bowhunters are vulnerable to outdoor crime while

afield. For these reasons bowhunters in Western Maryland should be allowed to carry a firearm for their protection.

In February of 2014 similar legislation (SB 231) passed in the state Senate by a 43 to 2 vote and subsequently through the House 120 to 9. That bill permits bowhunters who are otherwise authorized to carry a handgun to openly carry while afield for protection while hunting in Deer Management Region A.

SB-0449 simply recognizes the regional growth population of black bears in Western Maryland counties and seeks to expand the ability of bowhunters in Washington and Frederick counties of Deer Management Region B to protect themselves from harm in extreme circumstances.

Together with the sportsmen and sportswomen of Western Maryland, we strongly urge you to support and vote favorably on SB-0449.

Respectfully,

Ben Kelkye

President
Western Maryland Sportsmen's Coalition, Inc.

Ben Kelkye	President, WMSC, President Frederick County Sportsmen's Council
Jerry Zembower	President, Garrett & Allegany Sportsmen's Association
Joe Winter	President, Washington County Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs
Matt Guilfoyle	President, Carroll County Sportsmen's Association

Garrett

Allegany

Washington

Frederick

Carroll

SB0449_Testimony_2A_Maryland.pdf

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Position: FAV



Senate Bill 0449
Frederick and Washington Counties – Bow Hunting
Openly Carrying Handguns
FAVORABLE

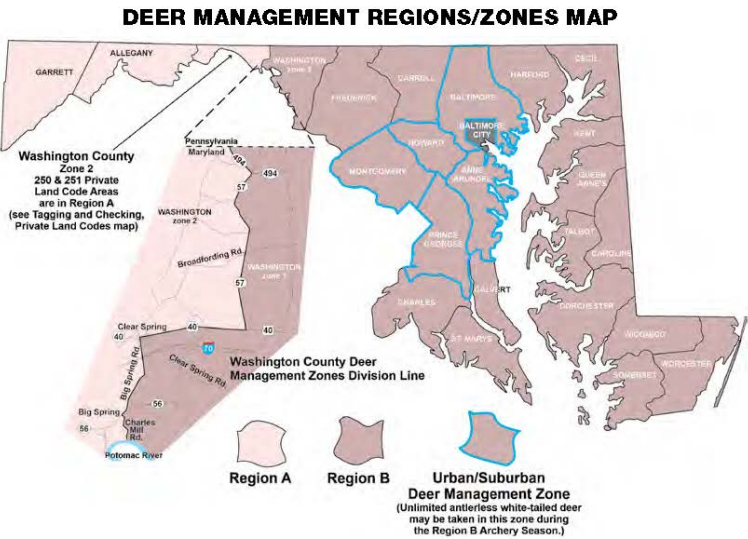
Current law provides that a bow hunter may wear and carry a handgun while hunting deer in Region A as a reasonable precaution against black bears. As shown on the map below, Region A is comprised of Garrett and Allegany Counties and the western portion of Washington County. Due to successful conservation practices, the black bear population has increased in Area A and the black bear population has now significantly increased in the remaining portion of Washington County and into Frederick County.

This bill simply extends the area where a bow hunter may carry a handgun to include all of Washington and Frederick Counties.

DEER HUNTING

REGION A: Allegany County, Garrett County and the western portion of Washington County (Zone 2, Private Land Code Areas 250 and 251) that lies west of a line beginning at the intersection of Rt. 494 and the Pennsylvania line, south on Rt. 494 to Rt. 57, south on Rt. 57 to Rt. 40 at St. Paul's Church, west on Rt. 40 to the junction of Big Spring Rd. and Rt. 40 in Clear Spring, south on Big Spring Rd. to the junction of Rt. 56 at Big Spring, following Rt. 56 west to the junction of Charles Mill Rd., then south on Charles Mill Rd. to the Potomac River.

REGION B: Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Calvert, Caroline, Carroll, Cecil, Charles, Dorchester, Frederick, Harford, Howard, Kent, Montgomery, Prince George's, Queen Anne's, St. Mary's, Somerset, Talbot, the eastern portion of Washington County, Zone 1, Private Land Code Area 252, that lies east of a line beginning at the intersection of Rt. 494 and the Pennsylvania line, south on Rt. 494 to Rt. 57, south on Rt. 57 to Rt. 40 at St. Paul's Church, west on Rt. 40 to the junction of Big Spring Rd. and Rt. 40 in Clear Spring, south on Big Spring Rd. to the junction of Rt. 56 at Big Spring, following Rt. 56 west to the junction of Charles Mill Rd., then south on Charles Mill Rd. to the Potomac River), Wicomico and Worcester counties.



We urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 449.

Respectfully,

John H. Josselyn
2A Maryland
03/04/2025