

Delegate Allen,

I am a life long Maryland resident and have been a hunter for approximately 20 years. I am primarily an upland bird hunter and am passionate about pursuing and preserving the Ruffed Grouse and American Woodcock. **I am strongly opposed to new legislation that would ban the use of lead ammunition for hunting in Maryland. Lead ammunition is affordable, readily available, effective and humane and necessary for certain types of firearms.**

Lead ammunition is affordable. Hunting allows citizens of this state the ability to self-source truly organic protein in an affordable way. Outlawing lead ammunition will drive up the cost hunters must pay to be able to participate in this activity. For example, my preferred shot shell for hunting ruffed grouse is a Winchester AA 20 gauge 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ inch with number 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ shot which currently retails at Bass Pro Shops for \$11.99 per box. The next closest and safe to use non-lead alternative would be Kent Bismuth Upland Non-Toxic 20 gauge 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ inch with number 6 shot and that currently sells for \$46.99 a box at the same retailer. That's nearly four times more expensive.

Lead ammunition is readily available in a wide range of calibers and shotshells. Currently, there is a limited amount of non-lead ammunition available on the market. For shotguns, most of the non-lead ammunition available is designed for waterfowl hunting which requires larger shot sizes and more powerful loads than would be required for other applications such as forest game and upland game. Most non-lead shotgun ammunition is made from steel which is less dense than lead and as such necessitates larger shot sizes to carry enough weight and energy to be effective and humane. For smaller game animals such as rabbit or grouse, steel is not effective as the shot count per shell would be reduced substantially to allow for larger shot size. And other non-lead alternatives that have a similar density as lead are significantly more expensive as noted in the paragraph above. Simply put, banning lead shot would make it extremely difficult to hunt certain game animals with the current non-lead ammunition available on the market.

Lead ammunition is effective at its intended purpose of quickly and humanely killing game. Lead has been used since man first invented the gun because it is dense and soft which is the ideal combination for the manufacture of bullets and shot. Lead's density allows a small sized object to carry energy a long distance. Lead's relative softness allows it to travel down a gun barrel without causing harm to the barrel. When lead reaches its destination, its softness allows it to expand upon impact causing more significant trauma leading to a fast and humane death for game. There are some applications where non-lead alternatives can be effective. Example of which is solid copper bullets in high powered rifles. Because these bullets can be propelled at such speed, they're able to remain effective and humane despite their lack of expansion upon impact. But in Maryland, many counties limit to use of high-powered rifles for deer hunting and instead require the use of shotguns shooting a single projectile (aka shotgun slug) or straight walled cartridge rifles. Both shotguns shooting slugs and straight walled cartridges are propelling bullets at a relatively low velocity. For these guns, many argue that copper and other non-lead alternatives are ineffective at quickly killing game. This would lead to a slower death for the game animal and the higher potential for game to go unrecovered.

Many firearms were designed to only shoot lead and the use of non-lead alternatives such as steel would damage them. One of my passions is collecting and hunting with antique hunting firearms from the early 20th century. These guns were manufactured with a level of craftsmanship that we do not see today in modern mass-produced firearms. Shotguns of this era were produced with fixed chokes unlike guns of today where the choke screws into the barrel and is interchangeable. The choke on a shotgun is funnel built into the end of the barrel that constricts the shot allowing for a consistent uniform pattern of shot at greater distances for taking game. Lead, being relatively soft, is able to squeeze through the choke without damaging the barrel. Non-lead alternatives such as steel are not soft and will damage the gun barrel. There are non-lead alternatives with a softness more similar to lead, but they are significantly more expensive and are very limited in their availability. Older rifles are not immune to the damages of non-lead shot. Most guns made before 1970 have weaker steel than guns made today. Shooting non-lead will cause irreparable damage to these older rifles. And the rifling inside the barrel was never intended to shoot non-lead and often is not capable of producing the accuracy needed to effectively and humanly kill game. These older firearms are often family heirlooms and tell stories of generations of hunters who've taken to the fields and forest of Maryland to enjoy the great outdoors. The legislation you're trying to pass will put an end to that heritage.

Much of the conversation I've heard around banning lead hunting ammunition centers around protecting scavengers, including eagles, from getting lead poisoning after consuming game that was shot but unrecovered or consuming gut piles from field dressed deer. Much of this talk seems to originate from California, where lead ammo was banned to protect the California Condor, whose population was critically low. I don't agree with what California did and I don't think that we need their laws here in Maryland. In the case of Eagles, we have seen a huge rebound in the Bald Eagle population in my lifetime. In addition to being a hunter I'm also a fisherman and can easily attest that I may see 20 bald eagles in a day when fishing the tributary rivers of the Chesapeake Bay. We do not need legislation to fix a problem that doesn't exist. And we do not need to infringe on the rights of thousands of citizens to protect a very small number of animals from an otherwise healthy and robust population.

Please do not move forward with any legislation to ban the use of lead ammunition for hunting in the state of Maryland.

Sincerely,

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