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February 3, 2026

The Honorable Brian Feldman
Chairman, Senate Education, Energy & Environment Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: SB 181 – Lead Ammunition – Phase-Out – FAVORABLE

Dear Chairman Feldman and Members of the Committee:

My name is Ted Williams. I am a journalist. I write exclusively about fish and wildlife. I've been a full-time freelance writer for the last half-century, and I serve on the Circle of Chiefs of the Outdoor Writers Association of America. I've been published in such outlets as *Outdoor Life*, *Audubon*, *Sierra*, *National Wildlife*, *Smithsonian*, *Earth Island Journal*, *High Country News*, *Modern Maturity*, *Yale Environment 360*, *Yankee*, *Reader's Digest* and *Slate*. I'm a life-long hunter, own a dozen guns and have a permit to carry a concealed high-capacity handgun. As a former information officer for the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, I worked closely with hunters. I continue to work with them.

I am writing in strong support of SB 181, the phase-out of lead ammunition for hunting, for the following reasons:

- The bill would protect humans from lead poisoning
- The bill would protect wildlife from lead poisoning
- Non-toxic ammo (mostly copper) kills more cleanly, more effectively and more humanely than toxic lead. It is only slightly more expensive than lead, and the price is going down.

I respectfully urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on SB 181.
Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Ted Williams

It baffles me why so many of my fellow hunters insist on poisoning wildlife, themselves, friends and family by using lead ammo when the expense of swapping to more efficient nontoxic copper for a hunting season would amount roughly to a Starbucks latte.

The claim I've been hearing from lead defenders that squirrel hunters can't buy non-toxic .22 rimfire ammo is patently false. It is now readily available and, like higher caliber non-toxic ammo, only marginally more expensive. What's more, tests by the Wildlife Society show that it performs as well or better than lead. (<https://wildlife.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/wsb.1255>)

Readily available non-toxic .22 rimfire products include: Norma ECO Speed-2, CCI® TNT® Green .22 WMR 30 Grain Lead-Free Rimfire Ammo, and Hornady Varmint Express Rimfire 17HMR 15.5 Grain Nontoxic.

Multiple studies have found direct links between human consumption of lead-killed game and spikes in blood lead levels. A [North Dakota study](#) with 736 participants found that those who consumed wild game had higher blood lead levels.

The Minnesota DNR shot 80 deer and sheep carcasses with lead bullets, which left an average of 141 fragments, a mean of eleven inches from wound channels.

The health departments of North Dakota and Minnesota impounded 17,000 pounds of hunter-donated venison because it was contaminated with lead fragments.

The [Minnesota Department of Agriculture](#) X-rayed 1,029 commercially ground venison burger packages, finding lead fragments in 26 percent.

Forty-eight percent of ground venison packets analyzed [in Illinois](#) contained lead fragments.

Iowa requires this warning label on venison donated by hunters in the "Help Us Stop Hunger" program: "Lead fragments may be found in processed venison. Children under 6 years and pregnant women are at the greatest risk from lead."

The U.S. Department of Agriculture certifies commercial meat lockers. But neither it nor the Food and Drug Administration regulates lead in donated venison.

The CDC reports: “No safe blood lead level in children has been identified. Even low levels of lead in blood have been shown to negatively affect a child’s intelligence, ability to pay attention, and academic achievement.”

I polled the most hardcore big-game hunters I know. They serve with me on the Outdoor Writers of America Association’s Circle of Chiefs. A few of their comments:

Jim Low: “I’ve been hunting whitetails exclusively with copper bullets -- center-fire and muzzleloader -- for about 15 years and have nothing but praise. Highly accurate, sturdy, excellent expansion and weight retention.”

Matt Miller: “I have found copper superior in every way in my hunting for mule deer, whitetail, pronghorn and feral hog.”

Scott Stouder: “Nothing but stellar performance and the knowledge that I’m not killing others out there from magpies to eagles.”

Larry Stone: “Accurate, hard-hitting, and no fragmentation.”

Mike Furtman: “As I hunted deer today, I sat within sight of the gut pile from the doe I killed two days ago. Much of it had been eaten already, but what remained was dined upon by two bald eagles, three ravens, two pileated woodpeckers, one hairy woodpecker, several blue jays, and numerous chickadees and nuthatches. Which is why I switched to copper bullets.”

Ammo companies developed copper bullets not to protect wildlife or humans, but to kill game more effectively than lead bullets. They do. Hunters have known this for years. In 2012 *American Hunter*, the official publication of the National Rifle Association, selected the Barnes VOR-TX copper bullet for its “Ammunition Product of the Year Award.” And *American Hunter* field editor Bryce Towsley writes that the Barnes all-copper X-Bullet “redefines what we think we know about hunting projectiles.” And in a good way: “I have lost count of the game I have taken with Barnes X-Bullets in various configurations.”

The North American Non-Lead Partnership -- committed to protecting wildlife from poisoning by lead bullets -- includes 46 partners, all of which represent

hunters -- members like The Peregrine Fund (founded by hunters using falcons), Midwest and Northeastern Associations of Fish Wildlife Agencies, Arizona Game and Fish Department, Oregon Hunters Association, Arizona Elk Society, Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society, and Arizona Wild Turkey Federation.

The Partnership sponsors demonstrations in which copper and lead bullets are fired into plastic bags filled with water and housed in plastic drums. Slugs and fragments fall to the bottom of the drums. In one typical demo, hosted by Allen Zufelt of the Arizona Game and Fish Department and Partnership co-founder Chris Parish, Zufelt fires a Federal Nosler AccuBond 180-grain lead bullet, then a 180-grain Federal Trophy Copper bullet. Parish retrieves and weighs the two mushroomed slugs. The copper slug weighs 179.9 grains. The lead slug weighs 137.5 grains, having shed and scattered 42.5 grains of fragments.

The toxicity of lead hunting projectiles is ancient news. George Bird Grinnell published this warning in his sporting weekly *Forest & Stream*: “Until they reach the gizzard where the wildfowl grinds his food, these pellets do no harm, but, when reduced to powder...they become a violent poison.” The year was 1894.

Here are links to some of my other pieces on the poisoning of wildlife with lead bullets (and fishing tackle):

<https://www.landcan.org/landcan-blog/Poison-Bullets/349>

<https://www.hcn.org/wotr/let-them-eat-copper/>

<https://blog.nature.org/2016/11/28/recovery-saving-common-loon-lead-fishing-tackle-poisoning-birds/>