

My apologies, my intention below was to oppose HB 2795, I erroneously referenced the similar Bill's from the previous session.

Regards

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The Idaho Humane Society is a non-profit, private organization providing shelter for over 12,000 pets annually, funded solely by private donations and service fees. The Idaho Humane Society is the largest and oldest animal welfare organization and veterinary charity in Idaho. Completely independent, and not affiliated with the Humane Society of the United States or the ASPCA.

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February 19, 2019

To the Honorable Representative Brad Witt and Members of the House Natural Resources Committee
Oregon House of Representatives

Re: Testimony against House Bill 2050 and House Bill 2181

Dear Chairman Witt and Members of the Committee,

I am writing you in opposition to HB 2050 and 2181. I've served as the CEO of the Idaho Humane Society in Boise, Idaho as well as continuing to actively practice veterinary medicine since 2000. However, I worked as a veterinary technician in Eugene, Oregon and Bend, Oregon from 1988 through 1992, and upon graduation from veterinary school in 1993, I practiced veterinary medicine in Talent, Oregon. My experience in these time periods providing veterinary services to bear and cougar hunters who employed hounds largely informs my opposition to the bills in question. Not so much from the perspective of protecting cougars per se, but largely due to what I sincerely came to regard as the pervasive neglect and reckless use of dogs by what is in actuality a subculture outside the mainstream of responsible hunters and dog enthusiasts.

I grew up in Idaho, raised with a traditional upbringing which included frequent pursuit of hunting and fishing. In particular, I was an extremely avid bird hunter and throughout my teenage through young adult years I raised both Labrador Retrievers and German Shorthaired Pointers. I shot literally hundreds of ducks and upland game birds each season over dogs. Upon becoming a veterinarian, I made a concerted effort to market my services to the local hunting community that I identified with in particular.

During my time in Oregon, I became exposed to a community of hound hunters within whose ranks I found little to no concern for the health and well-being of their dogs, which stood in stark contrast to the responsible care that I typically did find within the ranks of bird hunters. I found these clients

viewed their dogs as a mere expendable commodity to which they provided below standard care. Injuries of varying severity, from minor lacerations to serious and even life threatening injuries were commonplace from trailing bears and cougars. It was not uncommon for these dogs to be hit by cars from crossing roads and highways when pursuing a scent trail. Whenever injuries occurred, in my opinion, these clients were among the very worst in terms of being unwilling to provide necessary medical care to their animals. I don't believe I have ever dealt with a group of dog owners who were so entirely transactional in determining what they were willing to expend to relieve the suffering of their animals caused by their employment in hunting. I recall in particular, on two occasions providing free euthanasia services to grievously injured dogs belonging to cougar hunter who would not pay for this service but instead threatened to simply shoot their dog. Malnourishment is commonplace in these dogs as well, as these packs are maintained at the lowest expense possible, and not providing any preventative medical care also seemed to be the norm. When hound hunting of Bear and Cougars was restricted around 1994, we saw both the Jackson County Animal Shelter as well as the Southern Oregon Humane Society suddenly inundated with discarded hunting hounds of various types, quickly abandoned by callous owners who had no emotional bond with these animals that had served them with such loyalty in the field.

I fully appreciate, in my role as an advocate for companion animals, that determining exactly where the line is crossed that separates a legitimate use of a companion animal for industry, science or sport from the unjustified and unacceptable is often hard for society and therefore lawmakers to determine. But, we've certainly drawn that line for unconscionable uses such as for example, dog fighting. I urge the committee to consider that employing dogs in this hazardous pursuit simply for sport, combined with the reputation that this marginalized community of hunters has acquired for disregarding the basic welfare of the dogs employed, and with all the resultant suffering; that this activity should remain illegal for all but the most imminent public safety threats from cougars. Cougars should be pursued by hounds only out of necessity when justified by an actual identified threat to human safety, and when no other options are practicable, and never for mere sporting pleasure.

I urge you to prevent these bills from moving out of committee for any further consideration.

Sincerely,

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