

Submitter: Kim Norris
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Natural Resources and
Wildfire
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB769

In 1994, Oregon voters passed Measure 18. For 30 years, it has protected cougars and bears from the cruel, abusive and unsporting practices of baiting and hounding. In 1996, Oregonians decisively protected Measure 18 by an even larger margin.

Oregonians are opposed to trophy hunting of cougars, including with the use of hounds, and want to keep them protected. Oregonians have already shown where they stand on this issue – twice.

Let's be clear: Measure 18 does not ban trophy hunting of cougars in Oregon. Measure 18 very simply bans THE USE OF HOUNDS to hunt cougars for sport, aka "trophy hunting". Moreover, Measure 18 ALLOWS the use of dogs to address threats from individual cougars who threaten property or public safety, or to carry out state wildlife management objectives.

In voting for Measure 18, Oregon voters have stated TWICE that they oppose the use of hounds to hunt cougars for sport, because it is cruel and violates the ethics of fair chase. A majority of Oregonians passed Measure 18 in 1994, making illegal the hunting of cougars with packs of radio-collared dogs ("hounding"). An even greater majority voted in 1996 to reject a measure to repeal Measure 18. Moreover, recent polling shows that the majority of voters, 65 percent, are opposed to the trophy hunting of Oregon's majestic cougars.

Despite this opposition, Oregon currently allows excessive trophy hunting of cougars and ranks fifth highest nationwide for hunting mortality of these large cats. Between 2008 and 2017, trophy hunters killed nearly 2,600 cougars. Oregon is one of only a few states that allow year-round hunting of cougars, even when kittens are dependent on their mothers.

Still, every year since 1997, some legislators have introduced a raft of bills to either weaken and/or repeal Measure 18. Multiple bills have already been introduced in the 2025 legislature that would subject Oregon's cougar population to hounding for sport and trophies, posing an affront to the democratic process and the majority of Oregonians who want cougars and their kittens protected from such cruelty.

LEGISLATORS SHOULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO CIRCUMVENT OR SECOND-GUESS THE WILL OF OREGON VOTERS. In addition to bills that would outright

repeal the statute, legislation has been introduced to allow counties to “opt out” of Measure 18, creating a chaotic patchwork approach to wildlife management and law enforcement. These bills set a terrible precedent. If counties are permitted to opt out of Measure 18, they may seek a way out of other voter-approved measures, rendering meaningless the state’s initiative process and damaging Oregon’s democratic institutions.

Thank you for your consideration.