

## An Opinion Opposing LD 2054

By: Corey Lord

***In Northern Maine, we don't need to be told how fragile a livelihood can be. If you have been fortunate enough not to feel it personally, you have definitely not escaped seeing it all around you. That is why conversations like the one surrounding LD 2054 matter even if you have never stepped foot in a sporting camp or guided a moose hunt.***

It is easy to dismiss the issue as a narrow one that only affects outfitters. Many people will do just that. I don't see it that way. I see an issue with the way small businesses are supported, the way collaboration is treated and the way that decisions made far away affect our rural communities.

Hunting is a tradition here. That tradition was built out of economic necessity over a long span of time. Moose hunting generates revenue supporting guides, cooks, housekeeping staff, meat processors, gas stations, and local stores.

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One problem with LD 2054 is that it makes it even harder for seasonal businesses to earn a living out of northern Maine. For some of these small businesses, limiting the number of moose tags allowed for lodges can make the difference between staying open or closing their doors.

Another concern is that limiting practices like permit transfers or partnerships doesn't solve the underlying issues it claims to address. Many letters have been collected from former policymakers, business groups, and local leaders and they all point to the idea that limiting cooperation between outfitters will do more harm than good. Across our communities, in all areas of our communities, collaboration is a necessity. In northern Maine, we have to work together because the calvary is not going to ride in and save us. If you are stranded on the side of the road with a flat tire, it is your friend or neighbor who will be along to help you. AAA would take 3 days to arrive from somewhere far south of us.

Likewise, Outfitters often work together to make sure that their hunters have a good experience, especially when dealing with variables like weather, wildlife movement, and the randomness of permit allocation. When one business succeeds in bringing clients to the region, others benefit too. That's how small economies grow. Together.

Believe it or not, Outfitters in northern Maine are not printing money. Moose tags help them make their seasonal revenue stretch through the year.

There are two sides to every story. Supporters of the current changes see them as a way to create fairness and improve the system. I do believe that it is important to be fair, but I believe the administrative means to support fairness already exist. Enforcement of long-standing rules and regulations is important and adequate. Issues like uneven permit distribution are already being corrected. Reducing flexibility is not the way to fairness.

Good policy should take the time to understand all the sides of a story and come to a clear complete understanding of the impact of proposed legislation.

You don't have to agree on LD 2054, but it is a good idea to pay attention. Today it is outfitters. Tomorrow it could be loggers, or gas stations, or restaurants or any number of small businesses that keep this region going. Northern Maine works best when people speak up, share their perspective, and listen to each other. If something affects your livelihood, your family, or your community, it's worth bringing into the open.