



# Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen & Conservationists

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On the Front Lines – So You Can Be in the Woods, On the Water or At the Range!

*Transcript provided courtesy of Pennsylvania Legislative Services*

## Senate Game and Fisheries Committee

06/24/2025, 9:00 a.m., Room 8E-B, East Wing

By Zoe Buchmann, Pennsylvania Legislative Services

The committee met to consider several bills.

### ► Senate Game And Fisheries

<a href="#">06/24/2025</a>	<a href="#">House Bill 103 - Adopt Amendment</a>
<a href="#">06/24/2025</a>	<a href="#">House Bill 103 - Reported as Amended</a>
<a href="#">06/24/2025</a>	<a href="#">House Bill 992 - Reported as Committed</a>
<a href="#">06/24/2025</a>	<a href="#">House Bill 1431 - Adopt Amendment</a>
<a href="#">06/24/2025</a>	<a href="#">House Bill 1431 - Amendment Defeated</a>
<a href="#">06/24/2025</a>	<a href="#">House Bill 1431 - Reported as Amended</a>
<a href="#">06/24/2025</a>	<a href="#">Senate Bill 67 - Adopt Amendment</a>
<a href="#">06/24/2025</a>	<a href="#">Senate Bill 67 - Amendment Defeated</a>
<a href="#">06/24/2025</a>	<a href="#">Senate Bill 67 - Reported as Amended</a>
<a href="#">06/24/2025</a>	<a href="#">Senate Bill 476 - Reported as Committed</a>
<a href="#">06/24/2025</a>	<a href="#">Senate Bill 517 - Reported as Committed</a>
<a href="#">06/24/2025</a>	<a href="#">Senate Bill 533 - Reported as Committed</a>
<a href="#">06/24/2025</a>	<a href="#">Senate Bill 800 - Reported as Committed</a>

**HB 1431** - (PN 1896) Amends Title 34 (Game), in Pennsylvania Game Commission, further providing for organization of commission; in game or wildlife protection, further providing for regulations, for report to commission officer, for surrender of carcass to commission officer and for unlawful activities; and, in hunting and furtaking, repealing provisions relating to hunting on Sunday prohibited, further providing for unlawful devices and methods and for the offense of trespass on private property while hunting and repealing provisions relating to hunting on Sunday without written permission. Requires the governor to ensure that at least one member of the Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC) represents the interest of agricultural commodities that pertain to normal agricultural operations and wildlife. Provides definitions. Requires reports to PGC officers regarding the killing of game or wildlife to include the location of the carcass. Asserts PGC will establish a self-reporting system that assigns an individual to remove deer for crop damage purposes and reports each harvest to a PGC officer via a telephone number, online application or public website. Asserts carcasses will be delivered to a processor for final disposition. Outlines violations, including for the failure to obtain written permission to hunt on a Sunday. Asserts that violations under this subchapter pertaining to written permission are considered third-degree summary offenses. Outlines exceptions to subsection (a)

pertaining to unlawful devices and methods. Adds situations that are classified as trespassing. Amends penalty information, including the forfeiture of hunting within the commonwealth for various periods of time. Adds that upon the dismissal or dropping of charges against a person, or upon finding that a person is not guilty of a violation, the person's privilege to hunt or take game or wildlife within this commonwealth shall be immediately restored. Effective in 60 days. (Prior PN: 1667). The bill was reported as amended, with Sens. Scott Hutchinson (R-Venango), Cris Dush (R-Jefferson), Judy Schwank (D-Berks), Lindsey Williams (D-Allegheny) and Sen. Lisa Boscola (D-Northampton) voting in the negative.

**A01288**, by Rothman, removes a portion of the legislation contained in the language and removes deer urine testing requirements. The amendment was adopted, along a party-line vote, with Democrats voting in the negative.

**A01256**, by Boscola, removes the use of deer urine in hunting practices. The amendment failed, on a party-line vote, with Republicans voting in the negative.

Sen. Boscola asked who is going to test the deer urine. Benjamin Slate, Republican executive director, answered that PGC does not necessarily test the urine and that the likelihood of spreading chronic wasting disease (CWD) through urine is extremely low. Sen. Boscola expressed concern about a provision in a bill that would permit the use of deer urine during hunting season. She argued that this practice could be considered a form of baiting, which is generally not allowed in Pennsylvania. She also noted that PGC has previously restricted deer urine in certain areas due to the risk of spreading CWD. She questioned who would be responsible for regulating or testing the urine if PGC's authority is overridden and suggested that the provision may have been added to benefit commercial interests. Sen. Dan Laughlin (R-Erie) responded by sharing his experience touring deer farms that voluntarily test their products. He referenced a conversation with a scientist who estimated the risk of spreading CWD through such limited use, like a few drops on boots, as extremely low, describing it as a "one in a billion" chance. He acknowledged the concern but argued that since CWD is already present in wild deer populations in Pennsylvania, the impact of using deer urine now is negligible. For that reason, he expressed support for the bill. Sen. Boscola thanked Sen. Laughlin for the explanation, noting that she now understands it is the deer farmers who brought this issue up.

Speaking on her amendment, Sen. Boscola explained her reasons for offering the amendment. She raised two primary concerns. First, she argued that the provision allowing the use of deer urine during hunting season effectively amounted to baiting, something that had long been prohibited in Pennsylvania. She contended that spreading female deer urine to attract bucks, particularly during mating season, constituted a form of baiting that went beyond the bill's stated purpose of expanding Sunday hunting. Second, she noted that PGC had previously taken proactive steps to restrict the use of deer urine in certain regions due to the risks of spreading CWD. She emphasized that the disease was expected to continue spreading and that the commission's restrictions were important precautionary measures. She argued that the provision enabling the use of deer urine appeared to override the PGC's authority and had been inserted into the bill with little visibility. She expressed concern that this part of the bill posed a more serious issue than the Sunday hunting expansion itself.

On the bill, Sen. Dush expressed opposition to the bill, despite supporting other elements within it that would benefit farmers and landowners. He acknowledged that those positive provisions appeared to be added primarily to gain the support of influential groups such as the Farm Bureau. He noted that while some vocal hunters, particularly those with the means to hunt in other states, supported Sunday hunting, the majority of his constituents, including many hunters and outdoor enthusiasts, opposed it. He shared personal reflections on how changes to hunting traditions, including the shift in opening day and the gradual expansion of Sunday hunting, had negatively affected family businesses and disrupted longstanding community practices, particularly in rural areas where hunting traditions are deeply rooted. He described a specific example of a family-run store tied to the hunting season that had shut down, underscoring the broader impact on rural economies and cultural heritage. While he supported the bill's agricultural provisions, he opposed it due to its

inclusion of Sunday hunting, stating that he could not vote in favor of what he considered a fundamentally flawed bill, even if it contained worthwhile elements.

Sen. Schwank voiced concerns about combining provisions in the bill to aid farmers with the expansion of Sunday hunting. As a horticulturist, she acknowledged the serious damage that deer and other wildlife can cause to crops and emphasized that supporting farmers is important to her. However, she opposed tying that support to the removal of prohibitions on Sunday hunting. She recalled that these two issues were combined in a previous legislative session and reiterated her opposition to that approach. As an alternative, she proposed that the Pennsylvania Farm Bill include dedicated funding to help farmers install physical barriers to protect crops from wildlife, a solution she indicated she would support. She stated that her opposition to Sunday hunting stemmed from the lack of consideration for other groups who use the outdoors, such as hikers, bird watchers and trail riders. She expressed concern that these groups had not been included in the discussions leading up to the bill and that expanding Sunday hunting without restrictions failed to take their needs into account. For these reasons, she stated she would vote against the bill.

Sen. Laughlin expressed appreciation for the differing viewpoints on the bill but defended the expansion of Sunday hunting as a matter of fairness and personal freedom. As a hunter and parent, he shared that some of his most meaningful family moments had taken place in the woods, hunting with his children. He criticized what he saw as inconsistency in Pennsylvania's Sunday regulations, pointing out that residents are permitted to visit liquor stores, cannabis dispensaries and casinos on Sundays but cannot legally take a child hunting for squirrels. He said he found this contradiction illogical and emphasized that the bill was not about forcing anyone to hunt, but rather about allowing those who choose to do so the freedom to enjoy outdoor time with their families. Referencing his eight and a half years in office, he noted that the legislature has passed many bills he views as more controversial or harmful to families, such as those expanding gaming. In contrast, he framed this proposal as a simple measure that respects individual choice and supports quality family time. He concluded by urging an affirmative vote, describing the bill as both pro-freedom and pro-family.

Sen. Boscola specified that while she had supported a previous expansion of Sunday hunting in 2019, believing it would provide flexibility for both PGC and hunters, she could not support the current proposal due to its broader scope. She expressed concern that this bill would go beyond deer hunting and potentially allow expanded hunting of black bears, a species she feels is already under significant pressure in Pennsylvania. She noted that expanding Sunday hunting without clear limitations gives PGC the authority to increase hunting days for bears as well, which she sees as troubling. Additionally, she reiterated her opposition to the use of deer urine as bait, stating that baiting has long been prohibited in the commonwealth and that she is proud of that standard. She criticized the inclusion of deer urine in the bill as a reversal of that policy. While she indicated that she may have been open to supporting the legislation with certain changes, she could not vote for it in its current form.

Minority Chairman James Malone (D-Lancaster) expressed his support for the bill, emphasizing the importance of giving PGC the flexibility to manage hunting schedules without legislative micromanagement. Drawing from his personal experience growing up in Wyoming, where activities like hunting, camping, biking and fishing coexist, he argued that with proper education and regulation, such coexistence is manageable and not inherently dangerous. Although he acknowledged discomfort with the authorization of deer urine, which he views as a form of baiting, he considered the broader benefits of the bill to outweigh that concern. In particular, he supported removing the blanket prohibition on Sunday hunting, allowing PGC to make data-driven decisions about scheduling based on its mandate. He also highlighted the bill's requirement to include farming community representation on the commission's board as a positive step toward inclusive governance. He encouraged a yes vote, expressing confidence that any future problems could be addressed as they arise.

**SB 67** - (PN 312) Amends Title 34 (Game), in Pennsylvania Game Commission, further providing for organization of commission; in game or wildlife protection, further providing for regulations, for report to commission officer, for surrender of carcass to commission officer and for unlawful activities; and, in hunting

and furtaking, repealing provisions relating to hunting on Sunday prohibited, further providing for unlawful devices and methods and for the offense of trespass on private property while hunting and repealing provisions relating to hunting on Sunday without written permission. Requires the governor to ensure that at least one member of the commission represents the interest of agricultural commodities that pertain to normal agricultural operations and wildlife. Defines “agricultural commodity” and “normal agricultural operation.” Mandates the commission to establish a self-reporting system that allows a person assigned to remove deer for crop damage purposes to report each harvest to an officer of the commission via a toll-free telephone number, online application or publicly accessible Internet website. Adds the failure to obtain written permission to hunt on a Sunday as a violation and makes it a summary offense of the third degree. Adds an exception under unlawful devices and methods to include natural deer urine for the purposes of taking, attempting to take, attracting or scouting wildlife. Adds to the list of actions that constitute trespassing. Revises penalties. Makes editorial and technical adjustments throughout the act. Effective in 60 days. The bill was reported as amended with Sens. Boscola, Dush, Hutchinson, Schwank and Williams voting in the negative.

**A01272**, by Rothman, removes deer urine testing requirements. The amendment was adopted, along a party-line vote, with Democrats voting in the negative.

**A01270**, by Boscola, removes the use of deer urine in hunting practices. The amendment failed, on a party-line vote, with Republicans voting in the negative.

Chairman Greg Rothman (R-Cumberland) noted that the amendments are the same as for HB 1431.

Sen. Laughlin, the bill’s prime sponsor, expressed support for the bill, emphasizing that he has been advocating for Sunday hunting access since the beginning of his tenure. He framed the issue as one of personal significance, sharing that he lost valuable time with his own children due to the long-standing ban on Sunday hunting in Pennsylvania. He described the current legislative moment as a significant turning point, noting that the prohibition has been in place for approximately 300 years, dating back to colonial times. He thanked Rep. Mandy Steele (D-Allegheny) for her efforts in the House and expressed enthusiasm about the bill potentially reaching the governor’s desk. He urged a yes vote, characterizing the legislation as a step forward in expanding personal freedoms for Pennsylvanians.

Sen. Schwank stated that her opposition to the bill was not anti-hunting but rather based on a desire for more balanced accommodations. She referenced the 2019 expansion of Sunday hunting as an example of a more measured approach and expressed disappointment that this legislation did not pursue a similar path. Citing safety concerns, based in part on a personal experience, she reiterated support for outdoor recreation while maintaining the intention to vote no, and expressed regret that the bill had not taken a different form.

**SB 476** - ((PN 431) Amends Title 30 (Fish), in preliminary provisions relating to boats and boating, further providing for boating education. Removes engine requirements and time and location options from the boating education exemptions. Strikes language regarding boating safety education materials to a person taking the boating safety course under commission duties. Effective in 60 days. The bill was unanimously reported as committed.

Sen. Williams, the bill’s prime sponsor, explained her legislation would authorize the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) to establish safety education requirements for users of electric motor personal watercraft, such as e-foils and jet boards. She explained that this legislation aims to align Pennsylvania regulations with those of the U.S. Coast Guard. She stated that with the increasing use of motorized personal watercraft and growing recreational activity on Pennsylvania’s waterways, the bill seeks to enhance safety by requiring operators to complete a PFBC-approved boating safety course and obtain a license. She added that the bill excludes certain types of personal watercraft, like motorized kayaks, canoes and vessels with motors of 25 horsepower or less. She expressed gratitude to the committee for their cooperation in supporting water safety.

Chairman Rothman thanked Sen. Williams for her work and urged a yes vote.

**SB 517** - (PN 480) Amends Title 34 (Game), in Pennsylvania Game Commission, further providing for organization of commission; in game or wildlife protection, further providing for report to commission officer and for surrender of carcass to commission officer; in hunting and furtaking, further providing for trespass on private property while hunting; and, in special licenses and permits, providing for agriculture access permit list. Adds that the governor must ensure that at least one member appointed to the commission represents the interest of agricultural commodities that pertain to normal agricultural operations and wildlife. Adds definitions for agricultural commodity and normal agricultural operation. Extends the reporting content requirements to include the location of the carcass and requires the commission to establish a self-reporting system that allows a person assigned to remove deer for crop damage to report each harvest to an officer of the commission via a toll-free number, online application or website. Allows a person to surrender a carcass to a processor for final disposition and defines processor. Extends language under trespassing to include entering or remaining on any land of another without authorization to do so, when the land is fenced or enclosed or subject to subsection (b), enters or remains on any land of another without authorization to do so when notice against trespass is given. Excludes counties of the first and second class from subsection (a)(4). Adjusts the grading of the offense for a person who violate subsection (a) (1), (3) or (4) to a summary offence of the second degree that may result in forfeiture of the privilege to hunt or take game or wildlife anywhere in the state for a period of up to one year. Adds that a person who violates subsection (a) (2) will forfeit the privilege to hunt or take game or wildlife anywhere in the state for three years and for any subsequent violations, the forfeiture period is increased to five years. Requires the commission to develop and implement a program to connect landowners experiencing wildlife-related damage with qualified hunters who are available to assist in wildlife population control and outlines the program content requirements. Effective in 60 days. The bill was reported as committed with Sen. Williams voting in the negative.

**SB 533** - (PN 519) Amends Title 34 (Game), in hunting and furtaking licenses, further providing for license requirements; and, in special licenses and permits, further providing for regulated hunting grounds permits. Establishes license requirement exemptions for members of armed services and disabled veterans. Outlines eligible individuals for the Military Event License Exemption and Military Event License Exemption Permit. Provides applicability. Permits the commission to promulgate guidelines for implementation. Defines “eligible individual,” “Military Event License Exemption” and “Military Event License Exemption Permit.” Permits exception for regulated hunting grounds permits. Effective in 60 days. The bill was unanimously reported as committed.

Sen. Devlin Robinson (R-Allegheny), the bill’s prime sponsor, expressed appreciation for SB 533, which directs PGC to waive hunting license requirements for Purple Heart recipients and disabled veterans with a service-connected disability of at least 30% who participate in hunting events aimed at enjoyment or rehabilitation. He explained that one assistant per veteran is also exempt from fees. He added that the events must be held on private land with the landowner’s approval and limit participants to no more than 10. He noted that the bill had previously passed the Senate unanimously but did not pass the House before the session ended. He urged support for the bill, highlighting studies that show hunting’s therapeutic benefits for veterans and emphasizing the bill’s role in removing barriers to their rehabilitation and enjoyment.

**SB 800** – (PN 861) Amends Title 30 (Fish), in fiscal affairs, further providing for establishment and use of Fish Fund and for establishment and use of Boat Fund. Extends the general rules for the Fish and Boat Funds to include any expenses required for the business of the commissions. Requires the maintenance of records for all funds expended and to provide annual reports to the chairperson and minority chairperson of the Game and Fisheries Committee of the Senate, the chairperson and minority chairperson of the Game and Fisheries Committee of the House of Representatives, the chairperson and minority chairperson of the Appropriations Committee of the Senate and the chairperson and minority chairperson of the Appropriations Committee of the House of Representatives. Effective in 60 days. The bill was unanimously reported as committed.

**HB 103** - (PN 1113) Amends Title 30 (Fish), adding a chapter to provide for at-risk, derelict and abandoned boats; and imposing penalties. Provides definitions. Establishes that a boat is presumed to be abandoned if the owner of the boat cannot be contacted and the boat is physically inoperable and is left unattended on waters of this commonwealth or other public property, is left unattended on or along waters of this commonwealth or other public property and does not bear a valid registration or has remained on the private property of a salvor for 30 calendar days. Stipulates that the presumption is rebuttable by a preponderance of the evidence. Authorizes investigations. Requires notices within seven calendar days of the discovery of the at-risk boat, derelict boat or abandoned boat to the commission and the owner, as well as public notice. Makes editorial changes. Provides for actions by the owner within 14 calendar days of receipt of the notice. Specifies recovery costs. Adds that a person involved in the notification, investigation, recovery or storage of a boat under this chapter shall not be liable for any claim of property damage related to the boat. Provides for the development, posting and submittal of forms. Provides for nuisances. Provides rules and regulations. Effective in 180 days. (Prior PN: 82). The bill was unanimously reported as amended.

**A01289**, by Rothman, specifies terms and notifications and amends penalty structures to match abandoned automotive vehicles. The amendment was unanimously adopted.

**HB 992** - (PN 1083) Amends Title 30 (Fish), in Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, further providing for Boating Advisory Board. Asserts the Boating Advisory Board will consist of the Secretary of Conservation and Natural Resources, or a designee of the Secretary of Conservation and Natural Resources, and the two at-large members of the commission as described in section 301(b). Effective in 60 days. The bill was unanimously reported as committed.