



April 4, 2018

The Honorable Nancy Skinner, Chair
Senate Public Safety Committee
State Capitol, Room 2031
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SB 1092 (As Amended March 22, 2018) - SUPPORT

Dear Senator Skinner:

The below signed wildlife conservation organizations strongly urge your support for SB 1092 (Anderson), legislation which would legalize suppressor ownership on long guns and allow their use while hunting in California.

Commonly known as silencers, suppressors are the hearing protection of the 21st century recreational shooter and hunter. Despite common misconceptions perpetuated by Hollywood, suppressors do not render gunfire silent – rather they only muffle the report of a firearm. In fact, on average, suppressors diminish the noise of a gunshot by only 20-35 decibels (dB), roughly the same sound reduction provided by earplugs or earmuffs. Even the most effective suppressors on the market, on the smallest and quietest calibers, such as .22 LR, can only reduce the peak sound level of a gunshot to around 110-120 dB. To put that in perspective, according to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, that is as loud as a jackhammer or an ambulance siren.

Noise-induced hearing loss and tinnitus are two of the most common afflictions for recreational shooters and hunters in the United States. By decreasing the noise of a gunshot to hearing-safe levels, suppressors help to conserve the hearing of recreational shooters, hunters, and their hunting dogs. In addition to hearing protection, suppressors also mitigate noise complaints from those who live near shooting ranges and hunting areas. Largely due to these tremendous benefits, suppressors are currently legal to own in 42 states and legal to hunt with in 40 states.

Claims that legalizing suppressors would result in an increase in crime and poaching are untrue. In his whitepaper entitled “Options to Reduce or Modify Firearms Regulations”, Ronald Turk, Associate Deputy Director and Chief Operating Officer of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), stated that “silencers are very rarely used in criminal shootings. Given the lack of criminality associated with silencers, it is reasonable to conclude that they should not be viewed as a threat to public safety”. Further, according to Ralph Clark, the CEO of ShotSpotter, the law enforcement

tool that helps police identify and localize gunshots, suppressed gunfire can still be detected by their technology. Lastly, because they add length and weight to their firearm and make them harder to conceal, criminals rarely, if ever, choose to use suppressors.

Even if legalized in California, suppressors will remain heavily regulated under the federal National Firearms Act. Currently, to acquire a suppressor in states where they are legal, prospective buyers must send in an application to the ATF, pay a \$200 transfer tax per suppressor, undergo the same extensive background check required to purchase a machine gun, notify their local Chief Law Enforcement Officer, and wait several months for the ATF to process and approve the paperwork.

In stark contrast to the way suppressors are regulated in the United States, many countries in Europe place no regulations on the purchase, possession, or use of suppressors. In the United Kingdom and Norway, for example, their use is nearly mandated as a means to help curb hearing-related injuries and disabilities for hunters and shooters. Several other countries – including Denmark, Finland, France, New Zealand, the Philippines, Poland, Sweden, and Switzerland – allow for the possession and use of suppressors with minimal government control.

Finally, because of the many benefits they provide law-abiding public, pro-suppressor reform has received a tremendous bipartisan support across the country. In the past three years alone, three Democratic Governors – Governor Steve Bullock (MT), Governor Peter Shumlin (VT), and Governor Maggie Hassan (NH) – have signed standalone pro-suppressor bills into law

It is because of all the above stated reasons that we ask for your support of SB 1092 when it comes before your committee on April 10th.

Sincerely,

Donn Walgamuth, President
California Deer Association

Darryl Williams, President
California Chapter - Wild Sheep Foundation

Don Kirby, President
Cal-Ore Wetland and Waterfowl Council

Mark Hennelly, V.P. of Government Affairs
California Waterfowl Association

Lori Jacobs, President
California Houndsmen for Conservation

Fred Harpster, President
Black Brant Group

Steve Hunter, President
Golden Gate Chapter – Safari Club International

Chriss Bowles, President
California Bowmen Hunters/State Archery Association

cc: Members, Senate Public Safety Committee
The Honorable Senator Joel Anderson