

Wisconsin Debates While Michigan Recruits Young Hunters

(MADISON, Wisconsin) - When it comes to recruiting new hunters, Michigan's aggressive new law to empower parents to pass on their hunting heritage to the next generation is paying off with nearly 31,000 new hunters. Similar legislation in Wisconsin remains mired in the legislature for the second session in a row, leaving sportsmen wondering why their Senators will not stand up for the future of hunting in their state.

In 2005, the state of Michigan passed an apprentice hunting bill, which allows experienced sportsmen to take a newcomer hunting before the completion of a hunter education course. In 2006, the first year of the program, Michigan had 14,558 apprentice hunters. In 2007 the program grew to 16,389 participants.

The apprentice, or mentored, hunting concept is part of the national Families Afield program created by the National Wild Turkey Federation, National Shooting Sports Foundation and the U.S. Sportsmen's Alliance. Since the program's launch in 2004, 24 states have passed laws similar to Michigan's.

Wisconsin remains a top priority to both state and national sportsmen's organizations, including the National Rifle Association, Wisconsin Bear Hunters Association, Wisconsin chapters of Safari Club, Wisconsin state chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation, Wisconsin Wildlife Federation, Wisconsin Waterfowl Association and more.

Comparisons between Michigan and Wisconsin occur on many fronts from college football to farming and timber, and of course hunting and fishing. Michigan has attacked concerns over declining hunting numbers head on, while the Wisconsin Senate is only hours away from killing similar legislation once again.

"Hunting is very important to the people of Michigan. When it came time to pass legislation we knew would ensure the future of hunting, we did not let politics get in the way, as sometimes happens," said former State Representative, Sue Tabor, of Michigan, who for years chaired her state's House of Representatives committee that handled hunting and natural resources issues.

In Wisconsin, state representatives understood the importance of the legislation, and approved it on a voice vote, with no controversy.

"I simply can't understand why the Senate won't just pass this important bill," said Bill Torhorst, former national president of the National Wild Turkey Federation, who lives in Oregon, Wisconsin. "After all the hard work sportsmen have done on this legislation, they deserve to see a vote."

The U.S. Sportsmen's Alliance is a national association of sportsmen and

sportsmen's organization that protects the rights of hunters, anglers and trappers in the courts, legislatures, at the ballot, in Congress and through public education programs. For more information about the U.S. Sportsmen's Alliance and its work, call (614) 888-4868 or visit its website, www.ussportsmen.org.