

April 2, 2018

The Honorable Autumn R. Burke  
Chair  
Assembly Revenue & Taxation Committee  
1020 N Street, Room 167A  
Sacramento, CA 95814



Re: AB 2497 (Cooper) Firearms: school gun violence prevention – OPPOSE

Dear Ms. Burke:

California Waterfowl regrets to oppose AB 2497, a “gut and amend” bill that would impose a tax on retailers for the sale of firearms and ammunition at an unspecified rate. The bill would also impose an excise tax on the storage, use, or other consumption of firearms and ammunition purchased from a retailer. Revenues from the taxes would be deposited in a School Gun Violence Protection Fund, which would be distributed in grants by the Department of Justice to schools for the placement of police officers on high school campuses. The bill would make further requirements on schools with respect to detecting and reporting threats of violence.

As an organization, California Waterfowl abhors school violence. California Waterfowl believes that proper and competent enforcement of existing laws should be sufficient to prevent gun violence at schools. California Waterfowl opposed AB 424 in 2017 that removed the authority of school superintendents to improve security by authorizing personnel to possess firearms on campus for the protection of students. California Waterfowl also opposed SB 620 in 2017 that made previously mandatory enhancements for using firearms in the commission of crimes discretionary.

California Waterfowl works to restore wetlands, and to maximize the food and habitat value of restored and existing wetlands for both migratory and local breeding populations of waterfowl. The organization is rated four stars by Charity Navigator ([www.charitynavigator.org](http://www.charitynavigator.org)). California Waterfowl believes that hunters are the driving force for wetland conservation. CWA works to ensure that Californians have adequate access to hunting lands, and that regulations and laws don’t stifle responsible, ethical hunting.

Hunters pay a wide variety of fees and charges at the state and federal level for the privilege of hunting game, including waterfowl. These fees and charges include fees to take hunter safety qualification tests, hunting license fees, state and federal duck stamp fees to fund conservation, fees for passes to enter onto state wildlife areas and federal wildlife refuges, and state and local sales taxes on hunting supplies, including firearms and ammunition. In addition, hunters pay a Pittman- Robertson tax of 11 percent on firearms, ammunition to fund conservation of wildlife habitat. Purchasers of firearms are charged a fee to take a test on firearms safety before purchasing a firearm. Purchasers also pay a fee for a mandatory

background check before a retailer may deliver a firearm. Proposition 63 requires retailers to take additional steps to handle ammunition sales and hunters to pay a fee for a background check before purchasing ammunition.


In addition to all these mandatory charges, hunters tend to be generous in their donations to organizations such as California Waterfowl that restore and maintain wildlife habitat. However, their capacity to pay ever-increasing costs is not unlimited. An additional tax will tend to discourage hunters and will lead to diminishing revenues for the conservation of wildlife habitat.

The Fish and Game Restoration Fund is the main source of funding for the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. The Fund has been declining in recent years as hunting and fishing license sales have declined. The Fund supports not only the department's programs for fish and game, but also department obligations to protect endangered and other listed species. The department is seeking a way to augment and rebalance the Fund without having to rely so heavily on license fees.

AB 2497 would impose yet another cost on hunters and other legal firearms owners that could impact existing fees and charges, which are the primary source of funding for most wildlife conservation. There is no evidence that hunters or other legal users of firearms have any part in school gun violence. The proper and competent enforcement of existing laws, the reinstatement of local discretion in allowing armed individuals on campuses, and the restoration of mandatory sentences for the use of firearms in crimes would have a far greater effect on gun violence than would piling on with an additional tax on gun purchases by hunters and other legal firearms owners and users.

We urge your "No" vote on this unnecessary bill. If you would like further information about California Waterfowl and its conservation programs, please contact Jeffrey Volberg at (916) 217-5117 or [jvolberg@calwaterfowl.org](mailto:jvolberg@calwaterfowl.org) or Mark Hennelly at (916) 648-1406 or [mhennelly@calwaterfowl.org](mailto:mhennelly@calwaterfowl.org).

Sincerely,



Jeffrey A. Volberg

Director of Water Law & Policy

CC: Assemblymember Jim Cooper  
Assemblymember William P Brough  
Assemblymember Travis Allen  
Assemblymember Rob Bonta  
Assemblymember Kansen Chu  
Assemblymember Adam Gray  
Assemblymember Kevin McCarty  
Assemblymember Melissa A Melendez  
Assemblymember Kevin Mullin  
Assemblymember Bill Quirk