



April 3, 2023

The Honorable Senator Susan Rubio, Chair
Senate Committee on Insurance
1021 O Street, Room 3310
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SB 8 (As Amended March 23, 2023): Firearms Liability Insurance – OPPOSE

Dear Senator Rubio,

The undersigned wildlife conservation organizations respectfully ask you to strongly oppose SB 8 – legislation which would require law-abiding citizens who own a firearm to obtain and maintain a gun liability insurance policy specifically covering losses or damages resulting from any negligent or accidental use of that firearm, including death, injury, or property damage.

SB 8 seeks to impose an unconstitutional insurance requirement on law-abiding gun owners who have a right to keep and bear arms under the Second and Fourteenth Amendments to the United States Constitution by preconditioning exercise of that fundamental right on their obtaining insurance coverage from a private third-party that has the discretion to refuse that coverage – assuming that such insurance is even available.

Similar in nature to a recently passed San Jose City Ordinance that is now being challenged in the courts, SB 8 is nothing more than an effort to decrease gun ownership by California's law-abiding citizens by increasing their cost of owning a firearm. In addition, lawful hunters and recreational shooters pay a substantial excise tax on all firearms, ammunition, archery, and other hunting related equipment pursuant to federal Pittman-Robertson Act (PR). Those dollars are allocated back to states to fund beneficial programs – including wildlife habitat projects that benefit game and non-game species. This year alone, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) will be allocated well over \$30 million in federal PR dollars – monies which will fund a large portion of our state's wildlife management, conservation, and research efforts. Requiring California's law-abiding firearm owners to maintain a gun liability insurance policy would only substantially disincentivize the purchase of firearms and ammunition – notably reducing their sales and, in turn, the associated federal PR funding allocated back to California for important wildlife conservation and management efforts.

Additionally, by substantially raising the cost of owning a firearm in California, SB 8 would disproportionately impact the ability of economically disadvantaged communities and individuals to legally own a gun to protect themselves and their loved ones, as well as their equitable access to hunting and shooting sports – at a time when the Administration and the Legislature are seeking to increase participation in outdoor recreation and access for all Californians.

Finally, our organizations share the goals of CDFW which is promoting California’s “R3” program – a plan to Recruit, Reactivate, and Retain hunters and anglers in California. Our collective R3 efforts are aimed at increasing public participation in the outdoors and supporting wildlife conservation activities that are funded through hunting license-related revenues. R3 is also supported by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, as well as numerous wildlife conservation groups across the nation. By substantially increasing the cost of owning sporting arms, SB 8 would seriously hinder California’s ability to achieve its R3 goals by creating a serious cost barrier to hunting recruitment.

The undersigned wildlife conservation organizations stand with you regarding the need for legislation aimed at reducing the illegal use of firearms and getting criminals off our streets and out of our communities. Yet, SB 8 would wrongly go after law-abiding gun owners who have nothing more to do with illegal firearms violence than any other segment of our lawful public.

SB 8 would do nothing to reduce criminal use of firearms, but would unlawfully tax California’s law-abiding hunters and shooters, impact our wildlife and their habitats, and disproportionately affect disadvantaged communities and the ability of the economically challenged to keep themselves and their families safe.

It is because of all the above reasons that we respectfully ask you to oppose SB 8 when the legislation is heard in your Senate Committee on Insurance on April 26th.

Sincerely,

Ryan Bronson, Director of Government Affairs
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation

Don Martin, President
California Chapter – Wild Sheep Foundation

Lori Jacobs, President
California Houndsmen for Conservation

Adam Chavez, President
California Hawking Club

Steve Jarvis, Chief Executive Officer
California Deer Association

Steve Chappell, Executive Director
Suisun Resource Conservation District

Fred Harpster, President
Black Brant Group

Mark Hennelly, Vice President of Government Relations
California Waterfowl Association

Steve Miller, President
Tulare Basin Wetlands Association

Gary F. Brennan, President
San Diego County Wildlife Federation

Corey Thompson, President
Cal-Ore Wetland and Waterfowl Council

Chriss Bowles, President
California Bowmen Hunters/State Archery Association

James Stone, President
Nor-Cal Guides & Sportsmen’s Association

Rick Travis, Legislative Director
California Rifle & Pistol Association

Keely Hopkins, Western States Coordinator
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation

Lisa C. McNamee, Legislative Coordinator
California Chapters – Safari Club International

Steve Hunter, President
Golden Gate Chapter - Safari Club International

Marc Engstrom, Director of Public Policy, California
Ducks Unlimited

Wayne Wickham, President
Sacramento Chapter - Safari Club International

Clark Smith, President
San Francisco Bay Area Chapter - Safari Club International

cc: Members, Senate Committee on Insurance
The Honorable Senator Catherine Blakespear
The Honorable Senator Nancy Skinner