

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
STATE OF MONTANA

STEVE BULLOCK  
GOVERNOR



JOHN WALSH  
LT. GOVERNOR

March 28, 2013

The Honorable Mark Blasdel  
Speaker of the House  
State Capitol  
Helena, MT 59620

The Honorable Jeff Essmann  
President of the Senate  
State Capitol  
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Speaker Blasdel and President Essmann:

In accordance with the power vested in me as Governor by the Constitution and the laws of the State of Montana, I hereby veto House Bill 27 (HB 27), "AN ACT AUTHORIZING THE USE OF A SUPPRESSOR WHILE HUNTING CERTAIN LARGE PREDATORS; AMENDING SECTION 87-6-401, MCA; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE."

Allowing the use of suppressed weapons for hunting was proposed in the 2009 and 2011 Montana legislative sessions. In both sessions, the legislation was defeated. I do not see the need for suppressed weapons for wolf hunting. I believe most Montanans would agree.

This legislature has already passed, and I have signed into law, HB 73, which substantially liberalized the methods by which wolves may be hunted in Montana. HB 73 allows hunters to obtain multiple wolf licenses, allows wolf hunters to use electronic calls and not wear orange when hunting wolves outside the general big game season, and reduces the price of a nonresident wolf license. That bill enjoyed overwhelming bipartisan support because these measures will facilitate a more effective wolf harvest, while maintaining Montana's time-honored traditions of fair-chase hunting.

HB 27 does not meet this critical threshold. Allowing suppressed weapons to hunt wolves will not provide a more effective wolf hunting season, or add significantly to overall wolf harvest.

Most hunters are very concerned about the future of hunting in Montana. They know how important it is to act responsibly to protect our hunting traditions through reverence for game animals, use of fair-chase methodology, and attention to maintaining a respectful public image.

Speaker Mark Blasdel  
President Jeff Essmann  
March 28, 2013  
Page 2

Hunting with suppressed weapons has negative connotations that warrant serious consideration in the face of attempts by anti-hunters to portray hunting in a negative light.

From a law enforcement perspective, suppressors represent a challenge to peace officers as they attempt to ensure compliance with both state law and rules set by property owners. Enforcing fish and game laws is a demanding job. We should not make a game warden's job that much more difficult by allowing a situation in which he or she cannot readily identify or locate the full sound of rifle shots in the field because of the use of a suppressed weapon by an individual who could have less than lawful intentions.

Property owners across Montana deserve the same consideration, as they endeavor to be good neighbors by allowing hunters access to their land. I believe most landowners prefer to hear the full discharge of a firearm when hunters or others with firearms are on or near their property.

For these reasons, I respectfully ask for your support in sustaining my veto.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Steve Bullock', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

STEVE BULLOCK  
Governor

Cc: Legislative Services Division  
Secretary of State