

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, Members of the Subcommittee—I want to thank you for allowing me to speak at today’s hearing. As a lifelong outdoorsman and current Co-Chair of the Congressional Sportsman’s Caucus, I am honored to be here today to discuss H.R. 877, the Modernizing the Pittman-Robertson Fund for Tomorrow’s Needs Act. If enacted, H.R. 877 would provide national, broad-based support to state fish and wildlife agencies to develop, guide and enhance collective efforts to recruit hunters and recreational shooters—all while continuing to protect the natural resources we enjoy.

As you all are aware, through a system of “user pay/public benefits”, Pittman-Robertson is the foundation of wildlife conservation funding in the United States. Since it was first enacted in 1937, the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Fund has collected over 8 billion dollars from hunters and recreational shooters to be used by states to fund wildlife conservation efforts, habitat acquisition and management, public access to lands, hunter education, and shooting ranges affiliated with hunter safety programs. These funds are collected from an excise tax on firearms, ammunition and archery equipment, and are matched by the states with funds from licenses, paid by both hunters and recreational shooters. Effectively, Pittman-Robertson creates a direct link between those that hunt and participate in sportsman activities and the health of the resources needed to expand and enhance those opportunities.

However, in recent years, the increasing urbanization and suburbanization of our population has made it more difficult for the public to participate in hunting and recreational shooting—correspondingly, the average age of Americans purchasing hunting licenses is steadily rising. This has a significant ripple effect—not only on the key federal funding models that support the conservation of fish

and wildlife, but also on the base of support for our public lands and on thoughtful natural resources policy.

Without a federal mandate or any increase in existing user fees or taxes, H.R. 877 will preserve the current user pay/public benefit funding of wildlife conservation for generations to come, while further expanding the flexibility of the states to make decisions that are best fit for them. Specifically, H.R. 877 would clarify that a purpose of the Pittman-Robertson funds is to extend public relations assistance to the states for the promotion of hunting and recreational shooting. H.R. 877 would also expand the Multistate Conservation Grant program by providing an additional \$5 million per year from archery tax collections for making hunter and recreational recruitment project grants that promote a national hunting and shooting sport recruitment program.

This legislation simply provides the authority for the existing funds to be used on programs that will help ensure participation in hunting and recreational shooting, thus securing the funding base long into the future. It's important to note that H.R. 877 does not mandate how PR funds must be spent. The discretion to determine the amount, if any, of Wildlife Restoration Funds spent on "hunter recruitment and recreational shooter recruitment" activities would remain entirely with the state fish and wildlife agency. Conservation organizations and state wildlife agencies alike have long advocated for increased flexibility for Pittman-Robertson fund spending.

This bill held wide support in the 115th Congress as it was ordered to be reported by unanimous consent by the Committee on Natural Resources on May 8, 2018 and later passed the House by voice vote on September 12, 2018. It is now more important than ever to provide state and territorial wildlife agencies the flexibility and tools needed to recruit, retain and reactivate hunters and recreational shooters. In doing

so, not only will we create a sustainable base of sportsmen and women in future generations, but we will ensure that funding for wildlife conservation will keep pace with the demands of our increasingly urbanized national population.

Again, I would like to extend my sincerest thanks to the Subcommittee for allowing me to speak today on behalf of this legislation. Thank you, I yield back the balance of my time.