



STATE REPRESENTATIVE

# Joseph A. PETRARCA

55TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

Sportsmen Update



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## New law ends hunting license display requirement

The governor has signed legislation passed by the General Assembly, which I supported, that eliminates the requirement in Pennsylvania for hunters to display their hunting license on their back while hunting.

Now, hunters are permitted to carry wallet-sized licenses as is done in 45 other states. It makes more sense to simply require hunters to have their license with them when they are hunting and now it is law.

## Sunday hunting considered

Legislation has been introduced that would remove the state's prohibition on Sunday hunting.

Supporters argue that removing the Sunday restriction would improve access for hunters at a time when the state's hunting and sporting tradition are in jeopardy, and would create an economic benefit for the state. Others oppose Sunday hunting for recreation, religious, personal and safety reasons.

The legislation could possibly allow Sunday hunting throughout the year; but may only authorize the commission to include Sundays as part of regular hunting seasons. Under current law, the legislature, not the Game Commission, has the authority to make policy regarding Sunday hunting.

Should that be changed? Please let me know what you think about Sunday hunting! Visit my website at [www.pahouse.com/Petrarca](http://www.pahouse.com/Petrarca) and complete my survey.



Rep. Petrarca and his son Jack at a NRA Youthfest sports camp this summer.

## Youth Mentored Hunting Program Expanded

A new law expands the Mentored Youth Hunting Program in Pennsylvania by allowing an adult mentor to transfer one antlerless deer license per year to a participating youth. Previously, mentored youth could not harvest antlerless deer.

Pennsylvania is the first state in the nation to create such a program. Brochures with more information about the state's program are available in my offices.

## Tough new poaching law

A new law is designed to combat poaching of big game animals in Pennsylvania with stiff fines and penalties.

Before this, Pennsylvania had some of the weakest poaching penalties in the nation. Now, poachers in the state could face thousands of dollars in fines and even a prison sentence – penalties that will reduce the incentive for commercial poachers to do so in Pennsylvania.

This law, which was developed with the Commonwealth's sportsmen and advocacy groups, is the first such serious review since the 1980s.



## Protection urged for Social Security numbers

Federal law requires all states to collect the Social Security numbers of people who apply for recreational licenses, including hunting and fishing licenses. The law was passed to help enforce child support orders, but it creates extra work for hunting and

fishing license-issuing agents in Pennsylvania, and more importantly, it puts thousands of Pennsylvania hunters and anglers at risk of identity theft.

While I agree that enforcing child support orders is important, there are

ways to ensure that parents pay the child support they owe other than having people's Social Security numbers collected by license agents and putting those numbers in potential risk of being stolen.

## Help protect wildlife

Thousands of crimes against wildlife are committed each year throughout Pennsylvania. No county or township is excluded because these crimes occur not only in rural areas, but suburban and even urban environments with increasing frequency.

Many Pennsylvania citizens have a strong connection to wildlife; a recent study indicated that more than 95 percent of people believed that the protection of wildlife was one of the most important functions of the Pennsylvania Game Commission. Other surveys have indicated that many people have witnessed wildlife crimes, but only between 1 and 3 percent of these crimes were reported. The reasons for this low reporting rate vary but many people are hesitant to get involved.

There are 136 Pennsylvania conservation officers that patrol more than 44,000 square miles of the state – over 60 percent is forested – for 12 million Pennsylvanians. Sportsmen and women, wildlife watchers and other outdoor enthusiasts spend literally millions of recreation days outdoors each year. With today's technology, cell phones work in most locations and reporting violations as they are observed is easier than ever before.



**Call the Turn-in-A-Poacher Hotline (1-800-742-8001) if you witness a violation.**

Pennsylvania conservation officers are sworn to protect Pennsylvania's wildlife and actively patrol and investigate reported violations. They make more than 150,000 enforcement contacts each year, detecting 16,000 to 20,000 violations.

Wildlife belongs to all Commonwealth citizens, and poaching is theft, plain and simple.



## Penalties set for driving a boat while intoxicated

A new law toughens the penalties for Pennsylvania's DUI laws by linking boating under the influence (BUI) with driving under the influence.

This means that DUI convictions may be factored in the sentencing for a conviction for BUI.

The change stems from an incident where an intoxicated boat operator caused an accident that killed a girl. Due to the current penalty at the time, the maximum he could receive was seven years because the judge could not take into account the man's previous DUI convictions.

It is not right that a person convicted of DUI should face less jail time simply because he did so behind the wheel of a boat rather than behind the wheel of a car. Under this new law, that is no longer the case.

## Hunters harvest 53 elk during season

Elk are one of North America's premier big game animals. In 2011, 53 of the 57 licensed elk hunters were successful during the season. Nineteen of them were antlered, 34 were antlerless.

The heaviest antlered elk was 930 pounds taken in Clearfield County.

## Castle doctrine expansion signed into law

I am pleased to announce that the governor has signed legislation I co-sponsored to expand a person's right to use deadly force to protect him/herself and his/her family.

The new law expands one's "castle" for purposes of self-defense to include one's porch, deck, patio or occupied vehicle. Additionally, the law eliminates the duty to retreat if a person has a right to be where he or she is attacked, the person believes deadly force is necessary to protect himself or herself against death, serious bodily injury, kidnapping or sexual intercourse by threat or force and the attacker displays a weapon capable of lethal force.

It is important to understand, however, that the elimination of the duty to retreat outside your home does not apply if:

- The shooter illegally possesses the firearm;
- The person against whom the deadly force is used is a law enforcement officer and the shooter knew or should have known that fact; or
- The shooter is engaged in criminal activity "related to" the underlying confrontation.

The law is meant to protect law-abiding citizens who are lawfully in possession of a firearm. It is not meant to protect criminals who unlawfully possess a firearm or who are in the act of committing a crime. This is a commonsense law that protects our Second Amendment rights.



It's always nice to see young individuals, such as my children Cecily and Jack (pictured here) enjoying wildlife and the outdoors.



Photos by Duane Hough.

## Bird feeding more popular than ever

More Pennsylvanians than ever are feeding birds. It's part of a nationwide trend that has been luring new participants by the thousands each year.



Bird feeding and its positive effects haven't gone unnoticed. The activity provides easy pickings and nourishment to a host of avian species in winter and spring, the times when many seasonal wildlife foods have been consumed or buried beneath the snow.

About 3.6 million Pennsylvanians – close to a third of the state's population – annually take part in bird feeding, spending in excess of \$135 million on bird food, according to a recent national survey. Nationally, more than 65 million people feed birds, spending more than \$2 billion annual – that's close to 5,000 tons of sunflower seed. No other wildlife-associated activity attracts more attention or participation.

The Pennsylvania Game Commission said the best bird food to put in feeders is black-oil sunflower seeds and suet. The two foods will attract a wide variety of birds.

### Game Commission bird feeding notes and tips

- The average Pennsylvania bird feeder annually spends about \$46.
- Startled birds taking flight from feeders often fly into picture windows because they see through them or see the reflection of trees.
- Throwing finely cracked corn on icy sidewalks solves a slippery problem and provides food for birds.
- Holiday fruit cakes and leftover dried dog and cat food make excellent feeding alternatives at bird-feeding stations.
- Shoveling snow from beneath feeders provides cover for and attracts ground-feeding alternatives at bird-feeding stations.
- Smearing peanut butter into the crevices of tree bark will attract woodpeckers and nuthatches.
- Platform feeders should be cleaned with bleach regularly to decrease the chance of avian conjunctivitis or other diseases surfacing at the feeder station.

## The Pennsylvania Game Commission is on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube

### Facebook:

[www.facebook.com/PennsylvaniaGameCommission](http://www.facebook.com/PennsylvaniaGameCommission)

### Twitter:

[www.twitter.com/PAGameComm](http://www.twitter.com/PAGameComm) or @PAGameComm

### YouTube:

[www.youtube.com/pagamescommission](http://www.youtube.com/pagamescommission)

The PGC will post wildlife and conservation information, photos and videos.



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## Scholarship available for future wildlife management leaders

A scholarship has been set up to benefit future wildlife management leaders.

To be eligible, an individual must be a full-time undergraduate student with at least a junior academic standing majoring in wildlife and fisheries science at the College of Agricultural Sciences at Penn State, or a college senior majoring in wildlife technology at Penn State University's DuBois Campus.



The scholarship is named after Wildlife Conservation Officer David L. Grove who was killed in the line of duty Nov. 11, 2010 while on patrol in Adams County as he was investigating reports of ongoing nighttime shooting and possible poaching.

The scholarship is being administered by the Conservation Officers of Pennsylvania Association and the Fraternal Order of Police, Conservation Police Officers Lodge 114.

## Pa. joins Wildlife Violator Compact

Pennsylvania's forests and waterways are safer after action the legislature took to keep irresponsible hunters, anglers and trappers out of the state.

The General Assembly voted to enroll Pennsylvania in the Interstate Wildlife Violator Compact. By joining the 37 other states in the compact, we ensure that if a hunter loses his hunting or fishing license in another state due to a serious violation, then he will lose his license in Pennsylvania.