

August 2007

DEAR HUNTING ENTHUSIAST,

The upcoming fall season could have been a disaster for Pennsylvania hunters and the businesses that depend on them.

Early this year, the owner of a farm in Lehigh County reached a settlement with a woman who had been seriously injured by a bullet that was fired from his property a half-mile away. A court ruled the property owner liable along with the man who fired the weapon.

Understandably, many owners of private property who, in the past, had allowed hunters access to their land began to post it to protect against the new issue of liability. As more property owners began to close off their fields and woodland, the potential existed for Pennsylvania hunters to be shut out from virtually all private lands, which offer much of the best hunting in the Commonwealth.

Not only would this have shattered hundreds of years of hunting heritage in Pennsylvania, it would have posed a financial burden. Gunsmiths, meat processors, outdoor supply stores and other hunting-related businesses and their employees rely on Pennsylvania's hunters for income.

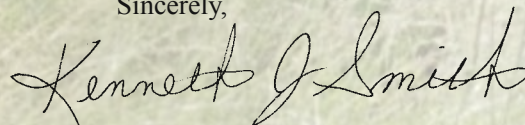
House Democrats responded promptly with the introduction of House Bill 13 to correct the landowner liability law deficiencies and allow property owners to keep their land accessible to hunters without the possibility of a lawsuit hanging over their head. I supported this legislation and voted for it.

The proposal was endorsed by the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau along with outdoor sporting organizations such as the Unified Sportsmen of Pennsylvania and the Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs. This bill drew bipartisan support in the General Assembly, achieving unanimous votes in the House and Senate en route to the desk of Gov. Ed Rendell, who signed it into law (Act 11 of 2007) on June 30.

Act 11 clarifies existing portions of the Recreational Use of Land and Water Act of 1965 to reaffirm the liability protection of landowners who allow others to hunt on their property. The new law applies to incidents on landowners' properties as well as those that might extend off their land. Enactment of this law should prevent the posting of additional private lands to hunters and prompt landowners who may have closed off their property in reaction to the Lehigh case to take down their signs.

I am proud that my support helped to protect the centuries-old Pennsylvania heritage of hunting, and I wish you success in the season ahead. If you are interested in updates about legislation, laws or regulations affecting hunters, log onto www.pahouse.com/KSmith and sign up for my sportsmen's updates.

Sincerely,



Ken Smith
State Representative

