



Senate Committee on Sporting Heritage, Mining, Forestry SB 301 – Mentored hunting December 9, 2015

Chair Tiffany and committee members:

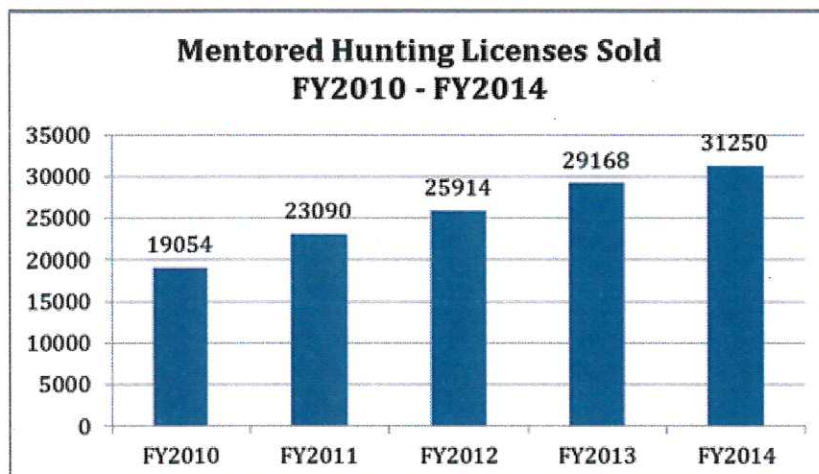
SB 301 modifies our mentored hunting law in two ways, it eliminates the 10 year old minimum age requirement and the restriction that only one firearm or bow can be possessed while hunting under the mentored hunting law.

Other provisions of current law would remain in place and, for a quick review, those conditions are:

- A mentor must be within arm's reach of the person for whom he or she is serving as a mentor at all times.
- A person being mentored must have a hunting license.
- A mentor needs to be 18 years of age or older.
- If the person being mentored is under age 18, the mentor must be the parent or guardian of the person for whom he or she is serving as a mentor or is authorized by the parent or guardian to serve as a mentor. This requirement does not apply to a person serving as a mentor for a person who is 18 years of age or older.
- A mentor needs to have completed hunter safety
- A mentor needs to have a current valid hunting approval.
- A mentor can take only one person hunting at a time.

Mentored hunting is a one-on-one opportunity giving first-time hunters a chance to try hunting in a safe situation and it enables veteran hunters to pass on their knowledge and passion for the outdoors.

Since the mentor hunting legislation passed in 2009 WDNR license sale data shows an increase in mentor license sales.



Implementing this legislation would require only minor changes to our licensing system so that mentored licenses could be issued to people younger than age 10.



TERRY MOULTON



WISCONSIN STATE SENATOR

23RD SENATE DISTRICT

From: Senator Terry Moulton

To: Committee on Sporting Heritage, Mining and Forestry

Re: **Testimony on Senate Bill 301**
Relating to: Eliminating age requirements for participating in the hunting mentorship program and hunting devices authorized to be used under the hunting mentorship program.

Date: December 9, 2015

Mr. Chairman and committee members, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today about Senate Bill 301 and changes to mentored hunting laws in Wisconsin.

In 2009, the legislature established Wisconsin's mentored hunting program. The program was designed to help recruit and retain new hunters by allowing a person to try hunting under the supervision of an experienced mentor. The program has been a success, with more than 28,000 new hunters experiencing hunting last year. Nationwide, 38 states have adopted a mentored hunting program, resulting in about 50% of mentees continuing to hunt after their mentorship experience.

Under current law, a mentee must be at least 10 years of age. Senate Bill 301 would remove this age restriction and allow parents to decide when their child is ready to begin hunting. This change would bring Wisconsin into line with the 40 other states who trust parents to make this decision. Current law also restricts the number of hunting devices allowed during a mentored hunt. Senate Bill 301 removes this restriction. Out of the 38 states with mentored hunting, Wisconsin is one of only four that restrict the number of hunting devices allowed. Many hunters are only able to hunt a few times per year and this requirement forces them to choose between acting as a mentor and hunting themselves.

Hunting is an important part of our sporting heritage and our mentorship program has proven extremely effective in recruiting new hunters across the state. I ask you to please consider the passage of Senate Bill 301, paving the way for more mentors and mentees to participate in this important program. Thank you again for allowing me to testify today.

Serving the 23rd Senate District

12/07/15

Reference Senate bill Senate Bill 301 and AB411

To members of the Assembly and Senate; Safari Club Wisconsin chapters want to go on record supporting AB 411 and Senate Bill 301 as presented. This bill will transfer responsibility of youth hunters where it belongs, with the parents and guardians of our young hunters. Every young hunter is different in his/her ability to properly and safely handle a firearm under a mentored program. This bill will allow the ones most familiar with the individual to make that decision. We also support removing the restriction on one weapon during a mentored hunt.

Currently, there are 39 states that have a mentored hunting program. Of those states, only four restrict the ability of the mentor to have a weapon as well. While it's easy to envision scenarios of potential problems, We would rather look to those states that currently have no restrictions and see what the history of problems has been. This reminds us of the beginning of handgun hunting for big game in Wisconsin, or even more currently the CCW law most recently passed. There were many that opposed those situations based on speculation and conjecture. We would rather base our decision on facts and evidence. In both the case of Handgun hunting and CCW what major problems if any have occurred? You had the opportunity to look at many states across the country and see the track record . You have that same ability now. Rather than restrict or eliminate a hunting opportunity for both a mentor or a youth based on conjecture, let's look at those 35 states that have no restriction. Certainly if it was not working, or there had been problems, those states would have moved to eliminate the two weapon provision. I don't know of any that have. Is that not a more accurate gauge of the program's effectiveness?

Lastly, we would like to point out the fact that many of our adult hunters have limited opportunities themselves to hunt. By restricting their ability to participate in the mentored hunt, we are eliminating a certain number of mentors that would be willing to do so. This also does not take into consideration the lessons that can be taught to the mentored hunter by watching the mentor harvest game.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dan Trawick". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and a long, sweeping underline.

Dan Trawick

Lobbyist Safari Club Wisconsin Chapters

Badgerland Chapter, NE Wisconsin Chapter, SE Wisconsin Bow Chapter, and the Wisconsin Chapter.



Wisconsin Firearm Owners, Ranges,
Clubs and Educators, Inc.

Phone 888-337-3534
www.wisconsinforce.org

December 9, 2015

Senate Committee on Sporting Heritage, Mining, and Forestry

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Re: Eliminating age requirements for participating in hunting mentorship program and hunting devices authorized to be used under hunting mentorship program. Senate Bill 301

Hunting is a very safe activity and mentored hunting even more so. Mentored hunting is a great way for new and old hunters to exercise Wisconsin's rich sporting heritage. Children develop the maturity to start this wonderful tradition at different ages. The age of the child being mentored should be left to the person(s) that knows them best -- their parents.

The parents and mentors of the new hunter are also better equipped to decide if the mentor and new hunter should hunt with one or two hunting implements. Restricting mentoring to one implement can greatly diminish opportunities because of the limited days available in the field.

Future generations greatly benefit from mentored hunting. It is our responsibility to remove unnecessary burdens keeping our rich sporting heritage accessible for all.

Wisconsin FORCE enthusiastically supports SB-301. Passing this legislation would greatly serve the citizens of Wisconsin. We encourage you to pass this bill.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeffrey L. Nass".

Jeffrey L. Nass
Executive Director
Wisconsin Firearm Owners,
Ranges, Clubs and Educators, Inc.
Phone 920-687-0505
Email jeff@wisconsinforce.org



OPENING THE DOOR TO THE
NEXT GENERATION OF AMERICAN HUNTERS

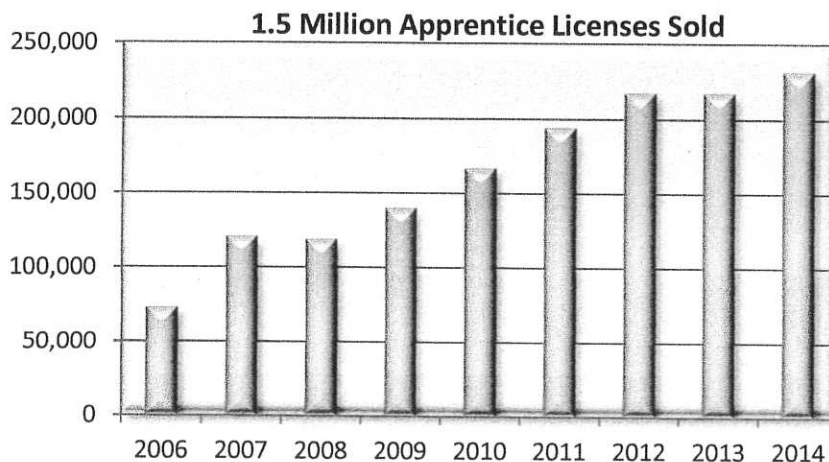
Over the past 30 years, the percentage of Americans hunters has been on a steady decline. This means less money for wildlife management programs and fewer mentors passing along our hunting heritage. In addition, hunters are growing older, and we're running short on time to recruit and retain the next generation of American hunters.

The Families Afield program was established by the Sportsmen's Alliance, the National Shooting Sports Foundation, and the National Wild Turkey Federation in 2005 in an effort to reduce and remove unnecessary barriers that impede the next generation of sportsmen and women from joining our ranks. Along with the National Rifle Association and the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation, Families Afield legislation has been passed in 39 states resulting in 1,480,473 apprentice licenses being sold.

Apprentice Licenses:

The hallmark of the Families Afield program is the apprentice hunting license (also called "mentored" hunting). The creation of an apprentice hunting license allows a new hunter to safely try hunting under the watchful eye of an experienced adult mentor before completing a hunter education class. Mentors instill safety, ethics, and their passion for the sport in new hunters in a safe setting, while allowing the newcomer the thrill of the hunt.

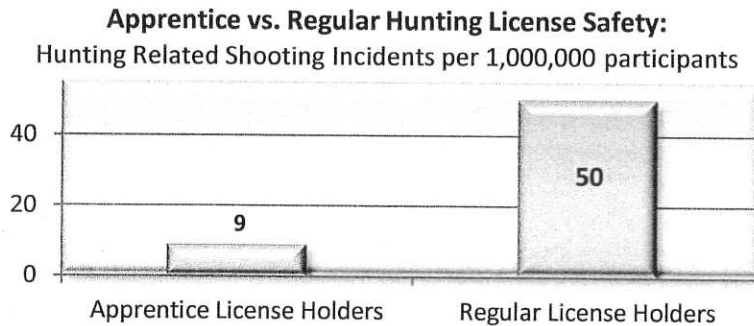
Apprentice Hunting Creates New Hunters:



* Apprentice Hunting Licenses Buyer Survey data compiled by Mile Creek Communications.

Apprentice Hunting Is Safe:

The safest hunter in the woods is the supervised youth hunter. In fact, Apprentice hunting has been shown to be more than 5 times safer than the general hunting population.



* Apprentice Hunting Licenses Survey compiled by Mile Creek Communications.

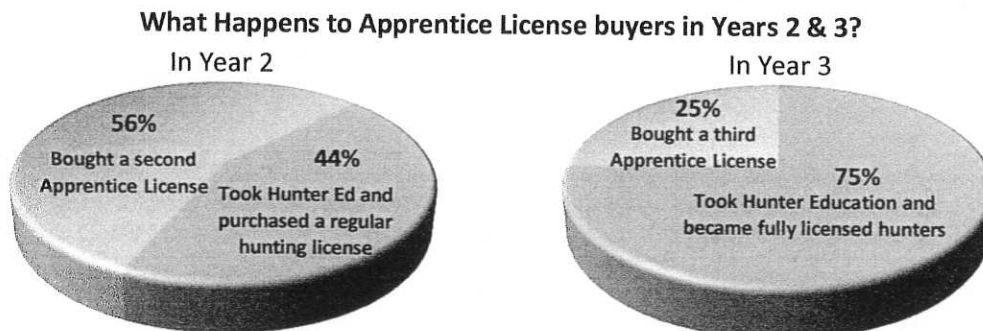
Apprentice Hunting Retains New Hunters:

Data from Ohio's Apprentice Hunting program shows that roughly half (47-52%) of all apprentice license buyers will be retained as hunting license buyers. This mirrors data from the Pennsylvania Game Commission that shows a 55% retention rate for their mentored program. With a 50% retention rate, Families Afield is not only one of the most successful recruitment programs available, it's also one of the most effective *retention* programs available to state wildlife agencies today.

Multi-Year Apprentice Licenses Convert More Hunters:

Apprentice hunting allows new hunters to *try* hunting before spending hours in a hunter education class. This "try-before-you-buy" concept allows mentors to instill safety, ethics, and their passion for the sport in new hunters in a safe setting while they get to experience the thrill of the hunt. *It's important to note that a component of each Families Afield bill is the requirement that prior to becoming a fully licensed hunter a newcomer must pass hunter education.*

Additionally, research from the Ohio Division of Wildlife shows that once Apprentice hunters are hooked, they voluntarily transition to becoming a fully licensed hunter by taking Hunter Education before it's required by law.

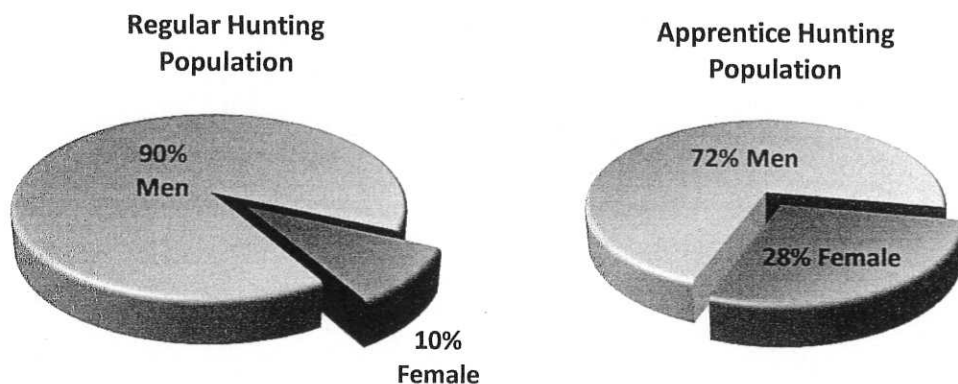


Data Compiled by: Ohio Division of Wildlife

In year two, nearly 1/2 of repeat license buyers (44%) took Hunter Ed when they could have continued to hunt on an apprentice license for two additional years. By year three, it jumps to 75%. This data demonstrates that Apprentice hunters are giving up the remaining years of eligibility for Apprentice licenses and transitioning to Hunter Education and regular hunting licenses.

Apprentice Licenses Successfully Recruit Females to Hunting:

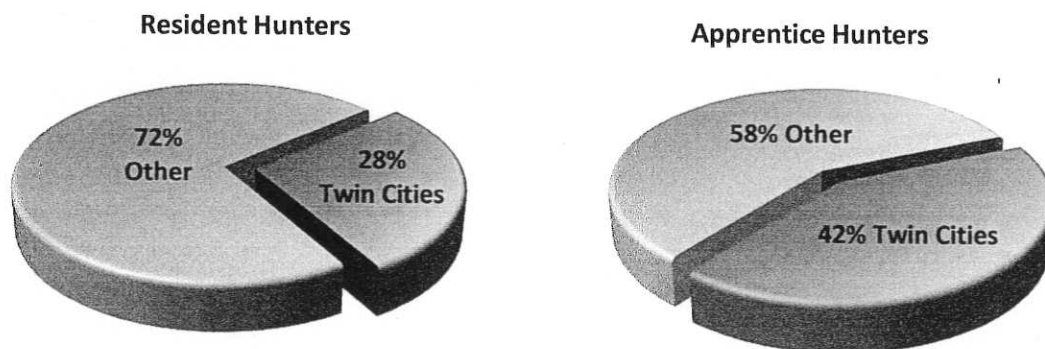
Data from Minnesota details the how Apprentice Licenses do a better job of recruiting females. In that study, nearly 30% of apprentice license buyers were female, a rate 3x greater than the general hunting population.



Data Compiled by: *Minnesota Department of Natural Resources*

Apprentice Licenses Attract Urban Hunters

The future of hunting in America depends on its ability to attract newcomers from the urban and suburban areas of the country. The growth of metropolitan areas has increased their political clout that it is a growing reality that city dwellers will determine future hunting and firearm laws. Data from Minnesota details the success Families Afield has had in recruiting non-traditional hunters from metropolitan areas. The research showed that 42% of apprentice license buyers came from urban locations. Metropolitan hunters account for just 28% of the general hunting population in the state.



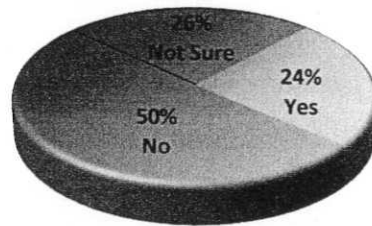
Data Compiled by: *Minnesota Department of Natural Resources*

Would Apprentice Hunters Participate Anyways?

It is true that some individuals would end up hunting if Apprentice licenses were not available; however the vast majority would not. Research from Minnesota makes it clear that without Apprentice hunting to help recruit new hunters, most of those individuals would have not hunted.

In fact, only 24% of Apprentice Hunters responded they would have hunted without the Apprentice license.

Would you have hunted if the Apprentice Program did not exist?



Source: Minnesota Department of Natural Resources - Apprentice Hunter Validation Survey

Mentored Hunting in Wisconsin

Wisconsin became a Families Afield state in 2009 with the passage of AB 672, which permitted a new hunter to try hunting under the supervision of an experienced mentor as long as three conditions were met: 1) the apprentice hunter must be at least 10 year old; 2) the apprentice and the mentor may possess one hunting implement between them; and 3) the apprentice must be within arm's reach of the mentor while hunting. Over time, each of these restrictions have proven to be unnecessary from a safety perspective, and are likely a disincentive for potential mentors and apprentices.

Allowing Parents to Decide

The Families Afield coalition supports the proposed legislation because it will remove yet another barrier that prevents the introduction of hunting to the next generation by removing the references to age for mentored hunting permits. This would allow parents to decide when their sons and daughters are ready to begin hunting. Parents, who care for their children far more than the government, are in a much better position to make this judgment.

Forty states, including Michigan trust parents to make this decision. In Pennsylvania, 49% of the mentored youth licenses sold are for apprentices under the age of ten. Trusting parents has helped to recruit 1.5 million apprentice hunters, while maintaining such an impressive safety record.

Removing a Disincentive for Mentors

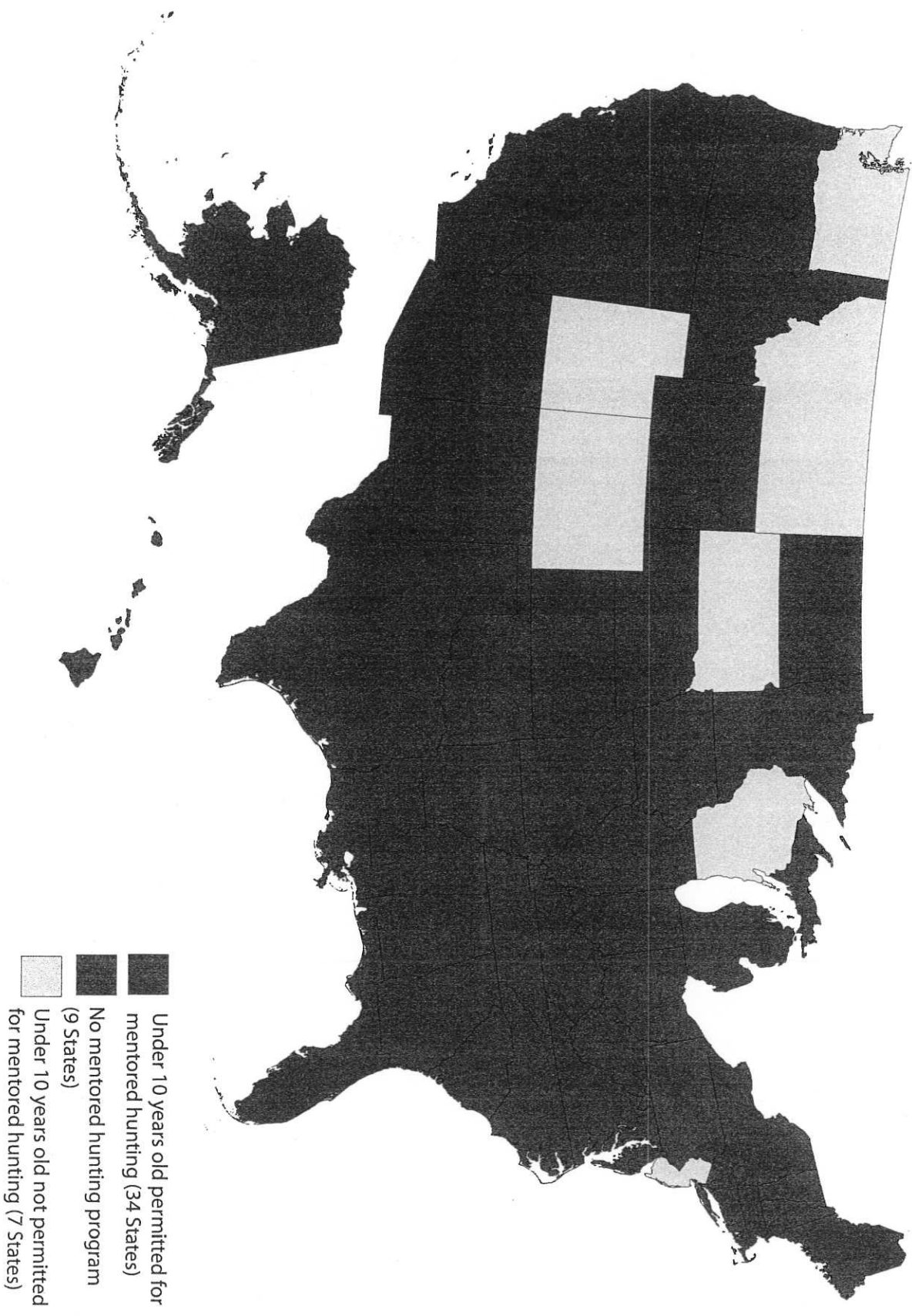
Only four states out of 39 restrict the mentor and apprentice to one hunting implement between the two. The remaining thirty-two states allow mentors and parents to decide if the apprentice is ready to begin hunting with a firearm or bow of their own. This unnecessary restriction is a disincentive for potential mentors who have a limited numbers of days during which they may be able to hunt. It makes them choose between being a mentor and hunting themselves.

About the Families Afield Program:

Families Afield was established by the *Sportsmen's Alliance*, the *National Shooting Sports Foundation*, and the *National Wild Turkey Federation* in 2004 in an effort to reduce and remove unnecessary barriers that impede the next generation of sportsmen and women from joining our ranks. Along with the *National Rifle Association* and the *Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation*, Families Afield legislation has passed in 39 states resulting in more than 1.5 million apprentice licenses being sold.

For questions, or more information, contact Evan Heusinkveld at the Sportsmen's Alliance – (614) 888-4868 or at evanh@sportsmensalliance.org.

Mentored Hunting States



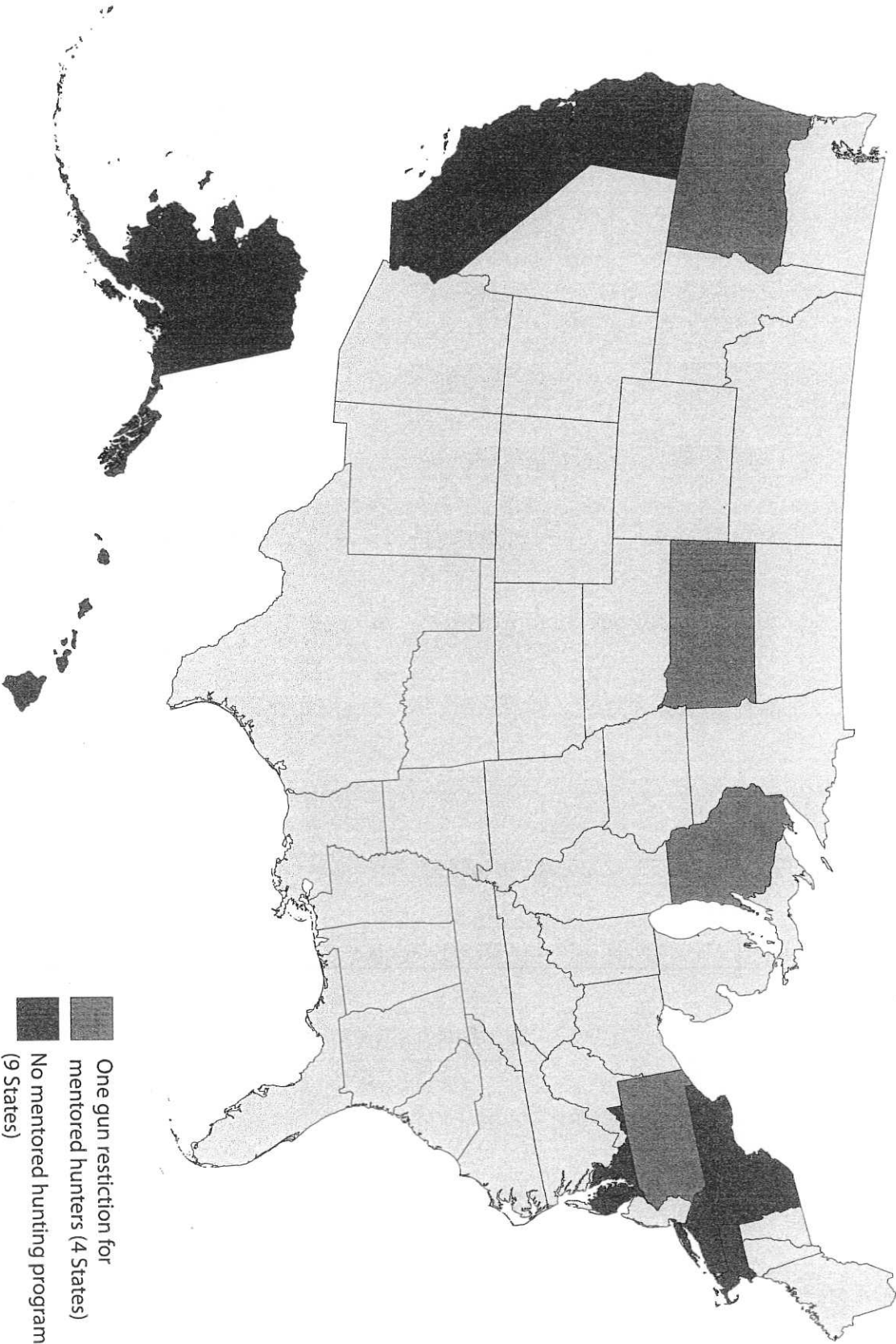
Under 10 years old permitted for mentored hunting (34 States)




No mentored hunting program (9 States)

Under 10 years old not permitted for mentored hunting (7 States)



Mentored Hunting
Gun/Bow Regulations



 No gun/bow restrictions for mentored hunters (37 States)
 One gun restriction for mentored hunters (4 States)
 No mentored hunting program (9 States)



Wisconsin Bear Hunters' Association, Inc.

TESTIMONY in Support of SB 301 – Mentored Hunting Bill **Al Lobner, WBHA President**

December 9, 2015

The Wisconsin Bear Hunters Association (WBHA) would like to go on record as strongly supporting SB 301. The bill makes 2 needed changes to Wisconsin's successful mentored hunting program.

The first would allow parents to decide at what age a young person is ready to become an apprenticed hunter. Currently 34 states allow this to happen, while only 7 set a minimum age of 10. Statistics show that an apprentice hunter – while hunting with a mentor – is the safest hunter in the woods. In fact – 5 times safer!

It just makes sense. Parents know their children better than any instructor or state official. We know that there is no safety reason to deny parents this choice. And we also know that in Pennsylvania, for example, almost half the mentored youth licenses sold are to those under the age of 10.

The second change would allow the mentor to decide if there will be one or two weapons used in the hunt. Currently 37 states allow the mentor to make this choice, while only 4 restrict it to only one weapon between the mentor and the apprentice.

This change is needed to encourage more mentoring. Many hunters can only hunt a day or two each season. In order to inspire them to be a mentor, sometimes it is important that they are also able to harvest game. While providing the experience to the apprentice remains the primary objective, there is no safety reason to deny the mentor the chance to also participate in the hunt. Remember that many apprentices are adults, so the idea that it is always best to stick to just one weapon is not always true.

Statistics from our own DNR show that the lack of having a mentor to go with is one of the biggest impediments for beginning hunters. SB 301 is needed if we are going to see our sporting heritage preserved for the generations to come.

Please join us and nearly every other hunting group in the state in supporting SB 301.



Wisconsin Wildlife Federation

December 9, 2015

Testimony on SB 301---Mentored Hunting Law Changes

Chairman Tiffany and Members of the Senate Committee on Sporting Heritage, Mining and Forestry, thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation and the 195 hunting, fishing and trapping organizations that we represent throughout the state. The Wildlife Federation is opposed to Senate Bill 301.

The Federation was a very active supporter in the adoption of the current Hunter Mentoring Law. We strongly supported the lowering of the hunting age to 10 without a hunter education certification in closely mentored hunting situations. The current Hunter Mentoring Law has been a tremendous success, tens of thousands of young men and women have initiated their hunting experience in Wisconsin under the requirements of the current law, which is established to provide a true mentored hunting experience and one that has been extremely safe.

The Federation has a 55 member Board of Directors which overwhelmingly voted against lowering the hunting age below ten years and the removal of the requirement that there only be one firearm during the mentoring experience. In addition we have found very strong support for our position from hunters throughout the State of Wisconsin.

We realize that there are some hunters who favor one or both of the provisions of this bill, however is that the prevailing position of hunters in this state? Most of you as Committee members have often spoken of the need and value of obtaining the input on hunting, fishing and trapping issues from the Conservation Congress Spring Hearings. The supporters of this bill have not introduced these Mentored Hunting Law changes into the Conservation Congress process even though it appears that it is a major change in state law that affects the hunting safety and experience of all hunters. The Federation has spoken with Rob Bohmann, Chair of the Conservation Congress, and he has agreed to place the provisions of SB 301 onto the spring hearing questionnaire. The Federation strongly supports the Conservation Congress process and hope that Committee members respect that process also and accept Chairman Bohmann's offer.

As to the merits of the bill, legislators have heard from many that have taught thousands of young men and women hunter safety that, based on their high degree of experience there is a relatively small percentage of youth under ten that have the physical, mental and psychological capability to actually discharge a firearm, especially big game, and kill an animal. The point is made by the bill's supporters that, well, let the parents decide. It is true that may well work in some situations but those teaching hunter education see every year, parents that misjudge the ability of their son or daughter to hunt.

Let's put this argument for the bill into a similar public safety context. The age to drive in this state is 16 years old. There are youth below the age of 16 that are capable of driving cars on the highway, especially youth that have been driving farm vehicles from a far younger age. But even though there is a small percentage of youth under the age of 16 that would be capable of safe driving on public roads, the state does not eliminate the driving age and allow the parents of youth to make that decision.

The second provision of the current law being changed by this bill eliminates the requirement that there only be one firearm between the mentor and the youth. That requirement is a key critical component of a true mentoring experience. It focuses the mentor's attention totally on providing the youth the necessary knowledge of hunting skills and lore to insure a quality experience which will develop them into lifetime hunters.

Recently I was hunting out in North Dakota and learned that they lowered their hunting age after Wisconsin did and they reviewed the laws in all other states and adopted the Wisconsin Hunter Mentoring Law as their model, ten years old and with one firearm.

Chairman Tiffany, Committee Members, you have seen over the past few weeks the strongly differing opinions of many Wisconsin hunters. Please honor your past commitment to the Wisconsin Conservation Congress and have the provisions of this bill placed before all of the sportsmen and women in Wisconsin at the Congress's Spring Hearings.

Thank you for your listening.

Submitted by:
Ralph Fritsch, Chair
Wildlife Committee
Wisconsin Wildlife Federation