



# ROB STAFSHOLT

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**DATE:** December 6, 2023  
**RE:** Testimony on Senate Bill 586  
**TO:** Members of the Committee on Financial Institutions & Sporting Heritage  
**FROM:** Senator Rob Stafsholt

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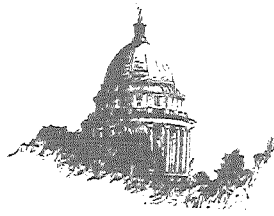
Thank you fellow members of the Senate Committee on Financial Institutions and Sporting Heritage for hearing Senate Bill 586 relating to hunting with an airgun.

Under this bill, if the DNR establishes an open season for hunting with a firearm, the season must also be open for hunting that animal with an airgun. Technology has come a long way and large caliber airguns generate enough velocity and energy to effectively kill large game. These type of airguns are currently allowed for use during large game seasons in over half of the states in the country. This bill will bring Wisconsin in line with hunting regulations in those states and facilitate hunters' use of the latest technology to maintain and grow Wisconsin hunting traditions.

Because airguns have significantly less recoil and noise than a typical high-powered, big game firearm, this change will expand opportunities to recruit more youth into big game hunting and facilitate continued participation for older hunters by lowering noise and recoil barriers.

It is also important to note that this bill does not alter any current laws related to firearm possession or ownership, rather it simply provides the opportunity for hunters to expand their opportunities for hunting.

Again, thank you for allowing me to testify on Senate Bill 586. I would be happy to answer any questions, and I would appreciate your support on this piece of legislation.



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# PAUL TITTL

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STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 25<sup>TH</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT  
Senate Committee on Financial Institutions and  
Sporting Heritage  
Senate Bill 586  
December 6, 2023

First of all, I would like to thank you for the opportunity testify before you concerning Senate Bill 586 relating to hunting with an airgun.

Under this bill, if the DNR establishes an open season for hunting with a firearm, the season must also be open for hunting that animal with an airgun. The bill does not alter any laws related to airgun or firearm possession or ownership; it simply provides the opportunity for hunters to expand their equipment used for hunting.

Airgun ownership and use is growing in popularity in Wisconsin and around the United States. Technology-wise, large caliber airguns generate sufficient muzzle velocity and energy to effectively kill deer and other large game and are currently allowed for use during large game (deer, elk, etc.) seasons in over half of the states.

The bill brings Wisconsin in line with hunting regulations in those states. It allows airgun use for large game in Wisconsin only during seasons that are open to firearm hunting.

Because airguns have significantly less recoil and noise than typical high-powered big game firearms, the bill will help to attract new hunters to the sport and encourage longtime hunters to continue hunting.

That concludes my testimony. Senator Stafsholt and I will be pleased to take any questions you might have.

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AIRGUN SPORTING  
ASSOCIATION

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS AND SPORTING  
HERITAGE  
DECEMBER 6, 2023  
SENATE BILL 586**

Under this bill, if the DNR establishes an open season for hunting with a firearm, the season will also be open for hunting that animal with an airgun. The bill does not alter any laws related to airgun or firearm possession or ownership, it simply provides the opportunity for hunters to expand their equipment use for hunting. This bill is intentionally very simple and straightforward; the intent is to expand legal hunting tools for those that would like to use them. Period.

Airgun ownership and use is growing in popularity in Wisconsin and around the United States. Large caliber airguns generate sufficient muzzle velocity and energy to effectively kill deer and other large game and are currently allowed for use during large game (deer, elk, etc.) seasons in over half of the states. This bill will bring Wisconsin in line with hunting regulations in those states and facilitate hunters' use of the latest technology to maintain and grow the hunting tradition.

This bill will allow airgun use for large game in Wisconsin *only* during seasons that are open to firearm hunting. Because airguns have significantly less recoil and noise than a typical high-powered big game firearm, this change will expand opportunities to recruit more youth into big game hunting and facilitate continued participation for older hunters and hunters of differing abilities by lowering these barriers. Further, experience shows that expanding regulations to permit use of the latest technologies is an attraction to begin and continue hunting.

Thank you for your consideration of this legislation and please feel free to contact Keith Warnke (608-334-1219) or Larry Konopacki (608-358-4500) with any questions that you may have.







## Senate Committee on Financial Institutions and Sporting Heritage

### *2023 Senate Bill 586 Hunting with an Airgun December 6, 2023*

Good afternoon, Chair Stafsholt, and members of the Committee. My name is Lieutenant Matthew Wehn, and I am the Law Enforcement Policy Officer for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. Thank you for the opportunity to testify, for informational purposes, on Senate Bill 586, related to hunting with an airgun.

Current law restricts hunting of most animals to firearms, bow and arrow, crossbows, and falconry. Only small game hunting authorizes the use of airguns as a hunting method.

In 2020 the department made a change to NR 10 which simplified weapon and ammunition regulations for hunting by deleting minimum requirements and replacing them with a simplified and adaptable framework for future weapon innovations. One of the core concepts of this rewrite was that hunters must use reasonable equipment, which prohibits weapons or ammunition that are, “of inherent design, or used in such a manner, as to not be reasonably capable of reducing a target wild animal to possession.”

Currently more than twenty states, including Midwest states Michigan, Missouri and Indiana, allow the use of airguns for hunting of large game. States allowing the use of airguns typically have minimum caliber or feet per second requirements to make their use legal.

Under Senate Bill 586, if the department establishes an open season for hunting an animal with a firearm, the season must also be open for hunting that animal with an airgun. It also requires that each license that authorizes the hunting of an animal with a firearm also authorizes the hunting of that animal with an airgun. The legislation also provides a definition for a “airgun” and makes their transportation in or on a vehicle and discharge on or near a road illegal, the same as firearms.

The department does not expect an increase in enforcement issues by allowing hunting with an airgun. As with the expanded use of crossbow, the allowing of airguns could provide new hunting opportunities for people such as disabled hunters, or those that simply want to try hunting but do not want to use a firearm.

On behalf of the Department of Natural Resources, we would like to thank you for your time today. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.