

February 11, 2026

Speaker Jason White
Mississippi House of Representatives
400 High Street
Jackson, MS 39201

**Re: HB 710; Reimbursement for Free and Discounted Hunting and Fishing Licenses
HB 1361; Game Check Program for White-tailed Deer**

Position: Support

Dear Speaker White and Honorable Members of the Mississippi House of Representatives,

On behalf of the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation (CSF), and as a resident of the State of Mississippi, I respectfully encourage you to support HB 710, which would require that the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks (MDWFP) be reimbursed for any lost revenue resulting from the issuance of free or discounted hunting and fishing licenses, admission to state parks, and other fees provided by the MDWFP through the State General Fund. I also respectfully encourage you to support HB 1361, which would require the MDWFP to develop a mandatory game check program for white-tailed deer.

Founded in 1989, the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation is the informed authority across outdoor issues and serves as the primary conduit for influencing public policy. Working with the Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus (CSC), the Governors Sportsmen's Caucus (GSC), and the National Assembly of Sportsmen's Caucuses (NASC), CSF gives a voice to hunters, anglers, recreational shooters, and trappers on Capitol Hill and throughout state capitols advocating on vital outdoor issues that are the backbone of our nation's conservation legacy.

Reimbursement for Free and Discounted Hunting and Fishing Licenses (HB 710):

Through the “user pay – public benefits” structure of the American System of Conservation Funding (ASCF), which includes revenue generated from sporting licenses sold and excise tax revenue from the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program (WSFR), hunters and anglers in Mississippi generate over \$30 million annually for state-based conservation. This funding is critical to the success of MDWFP’s mission to conserve and enhance Mississippi’s wildlife, fisheries, and parks, provide quality outdoor recreation, and engage the public in natural resource conservation.

While some free or discounted licenses result in what could be considered a minor impact on license revenue, the state loses out on additional funds that would have been apportioned through

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WSFR. To determine Mississippi's apportionment through this federal program, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) uses a formula that, in part, considers the number of certified hunting and fishing licenses sold in the state. To be certified, each license sale must generate a net revenue of \$2.00 otherwise the state receives no federal funds for that license sale. Free and discounted hunting and fishing licenses that do not meet the USFWS guidelines costs MDWFP not only the direct revenue from the free or discount license but also the 3:1 federal match from WSFR.

Game Check Program for White-tailed Deer (HB 1361):

Mississippi was the first state in the nation to implement a Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP). Our DMAP program went statewide in the 1980s, which became wildly successful and has resulted in Mississippi having one of the most robust white-tailed deer herds in the country. However, Mississippi is the only state in the nation that does not have a mandatory hunter harvest reporting structure.

One of the key tenets of the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation is science-based decision-making. The mission of the MDWFP is to effectively manage wildlife resources throughout the state, utilizing the best available science. However, if MDWFP does not know the exact number of hunter harvested deer, how can we expect them to effectively manage the state's white-tailed deer population? This is a commonsense measure that, just like the steps that have been taken with the mandatory turkey check, will give MDWFP the data needed to better manage our wildlife resources at no additional cost to the hunter.

In closing, CSF strongly supports HB 710 and HB 1361 to further advance and protect conservation efforts in the Magnolia State. Thank you for considering our comments, and please let us know if you would like any additional information.

Sincerely,



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