



The Maryland Hunting Coalition, Inc.

INFORMATION • ACTION • ADVOCACY

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LAWMAKERS TO CONSIDER DEER DONATION TAX CREDIT 2018 Maryland General Assembly

Maryland may soon find itself once again at the national forefront of advancing conservation-minded legislation as evidenced by an envisioned 2018 Act that would authorize a State tax credit for harvested deer donated by hunters to the hungry.

On September 24, 2017, the Maryland Hunting Coalition hosted its 3rd Annual Hunter's Summit in Annapolis at which time the tax credit proposal was advanced by the Honorable Johnny Mautz, a State lawmaker from the Eastern Shore in an effort to help thin the State's deer herd, especially does. When the Executive Director for the Coalition (Allan Ellis) asked for a show of hands in support – following a very rigorous debate – the vote was unanimous. The official record of the Summit reads: “Maryland’s hunting community stands united with Delegate Mautz in supporting legislation that would provide a tax credit for harvested deer donated to the hungry.”

When the Maryland General Assembly convenes in January 2018, the following lawmakers – all of whom are Members of the bi-partisan Maryland Legislative Sportsmen's Caucus -- will introduce the measure that would (1) provide a tax credit of \$50 for each antlerless deer donated by a recreational hunter with an annual cap of \$200; and (2) provide the same credit for antlerless deer donated by landowners with DNR-issued Deer Management Permits (“DMP’s”) without an annual cap:

Delegate Johnny Mautz
Delegate Wendell Beitzel
Delegate Ned Carey
Senator John Astle
Senator Wayne Norman

A brief background update is in order. Chapter 177 of the Acts of 2002, among other things as shown in the link below, stated that “DNR shall use \$1.00 from the sale of each resident regular and full season nonresident hunting license to provide funding for the processing of deer for donation to the needy.”

<http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/webmga/frmMain.aspx?ys=2002rs/billfile/sb0599.htm>

The \$1 earmark, however, was eventually ruled by the U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) to be in violation of the federal-matching criteria set forth under the **1937 Pittman-Robertson Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act**. To this day, this GAO policy decision continues to be questioned by the Maryland Hunting Coalition; but, suffice to say, the 2017 General Assembly responded to the federal threat by repealing the earmark for fear of losing coveted federal matching dollars – remember, there are no taxpayer funds (“general funds”) allocated to help underwrite wildlife management in Maryland so every dollar is indeed coveted (see link below to the Act).

http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2017RS/chapters_noln/Ch_102_hb0126T.pdf

For the last few years, the hunting community – in cooperation with the Maryland Legislative Sportsmen's Caucus – has asked for gubernatorial support to help find creative ways, through special funding, to continue funding for the principal deer processing program in Maryland: **Farmers & Hunters Feeding the Hungry**. Notably, these “special fund” dollars were derived – notwithstanding the federal threat – from hunting license fees; but, the Governor's decision to allocate \$25,000 in fiscal year 2018, was made clear it would be the last and that alternative means would have to be found to continue any State support in view of Chapter 102, Acts of 2017.

IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS, the proposed 2018 Act will constitute such a response plus serve as a “win-win” for all the reasons self-evident. The Maryland Hunting Coalition will strongly advocate for the bill's enactment whose fate rests in Annapolis. In the meantime, the Coalition encourages any and all in support of this conservation-minded proposal to share same with the sponsors:

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