



# The Maryland Hunting Coalition, Inc.

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## Sunday Hunting Debate in Annapolis 2018 Session

The Maryland Hunting Coalition has long-held that any effort to permit an expansion of Sunday hunting in Maryland – seemingly an annual topic of discussion amongst competing interests in Annapolis – not repeal any Sunday hunting that has been approved since 2002; whereby, Maryland lawmakers repealed a prohibition dating back to 1723. Some argue that DNR should be vested with complete regulatory authority – granted by law – to determine all Sunday hunting in Maryland. True, Maryland law grants DNR such broad authority; but, those days designated for Sunday hunting currently on the books have never been denied through regulation in any given hunting year. Why? Because those days are specifically designated by law via Section 10-410 of the Natural Resources Article (Maryland Annotated Code).

Here's the 2-fold concern about vesting DNR with authority to determine all Sunday hunting in Maryland: (1) it would undo all the remarkable efforts made by local governments during the 2002-2017 period to allow Sunday hunting (remember, in 2002, only 12 counties approved of any Sunday hunting and today, we only have 3 counties that do not allow Sunday hunting); and (2) it would vest complete authority with the bureaucracy to determine Sunday hunting in the future which could easily be undermined by a future elected anti-hunting Governor.

***...the Coalition will be at the table and do its best to secure statewide Sunday hunting consistent with our long-held position to safeguard that which exists and expand where it does not exist.***

A good faith effort was initiated by DNR in December 2015 to bring all impacted stakeholders to the table in an effort to find common ground on a statewide Sunday hunting bill. All the groups were there. Following much discussion, a compromise was reached whereby (1) all existing Sunday hunting dates would be maintained as is; (2) all future firearm hunting of deer would end at 10:30 am; and (3) other wildlife species would be allowed for Sunday hunting with no time-imposed restrictions. Alas, when it came time to actually drafting a bill consistent with and responsive to this tentative agreement, it did not happen.

Today in Annapolis there is a renewed effort to once again reach a statutory compromise on statewide Sunday hunting. Initially conveyed by some was the same thing we've heard over and over; that is, let DNR have the regulatory authority to sanction all Sunday hunting in the future and trust it will always happen each hunting season. The Maryland Hunting Coalition

has and will always reject this notion for reasons stated herein. **Instead, we have advanced the notion that any such bill maintain all existing Sunday hunting – again, advanced by local governments during the 2002-2017 period via local sportsmen and sportswomen and their local governing bodies – and vest regulatory authority for all future Sunday hunting by regulation.** This we believe is a fair compromise and would permit more days afield which are convenient to the hard-working men and women of Maryland who love to hunt on their day off. Whether or not this can be accomplished in 2018 is unknown; but, the Coalition will be at the table and do its best to secure statewide Sunday hunting consistent with our long-held position to safeguard that which exists and expand where it does not exist.