



Maryland Legislative Sportsmen's Caucus
The Sportsmen's Best Friend

July 1, 2016

ALLAN ELLIS
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MARYLAND HUNTING COALITION

RE: *The Poaching Restitution Act of 2016 -- Congratulations*

The Maryland Legislative Sportsmen's Caucus commends the Maryland Hunting Coalition for its Leadership in helping secure enactment of the landmark ***Poaching Restitution Act of 2016***.

We recognize the Coalition invested significant effort in researching the issue and developing the proposed Act following the 1st Annual HUNTER'S SUMMIT hosted by the Coalition on September 27, 2015 in Annapolis. The #1 issue of concern emanating from the SUMMIT was the need for a more punitive law to help deter poaching of deer, especially Maryland's nationally renowned world-class white-tailed deer. The Coalition advised the Caucus it would undertake this charge in consultation with the stakeholder community and Maryland's Department of Natural Resources. And, true to your word, the Coalition advised the Caucus of its proposed version of the Act – following the development of its White Paper entitled, "Deer Poaching: Maryland Perspective" which served as the basis for the Act – and sought sponsorship from Caucus Members. All who sponsored and co-sponsored the ***Poaching Restitution Act of 2016*** (Senate Bill 266/House Bill 410) were indeed Members of the Caucus.

Effective June 1, 2016, Maryland has become what many believe the most punitive state East of the Mississippi -- and within the top 3-5 states nationwide – pertinent to deer poaching punishment. The intent of the law sends a chilling message to would-be poachers that if you're caught and convicted of deer poaching in our State, you will pay a terrible price – a minimum of \$2,000 up to \$10,000 plus 80 hours of community service; not to mention the likelihood of losing your hunting privileges for up to 5 years as well (***Wildlife Poaching Prevention Act of 2012***). Indeed, we proudly note that The Boone & Crocket Club congratulated the Coalition of its Leadership in promoting the Act during the 2016 Session of the Maryland General Assembly.

In closing, please know the Caucus is mindful of the Judiciary's concerns about the Act – concerns expressed during the Session which were rejected by the General Assembly coupled with concerns expressed to the Governor following adjournment. We stand prepared to help defend this law against any changes unless they are absolutely deemed warranted at some point in the future. Again, a job well done and we look forward to our continued relationship with the Coalition on issues of interest to Maryland's hunting community.

Respectfully,

Senator Astle, Senate Co-Chair

Delegate Wendell Beitzel, House Co-Chair