

# RESTRICTIONS ON SUNDAY HUNTING

Today, state laws in the U.S. have little in common with the laws imposed during the colonial period. One exception is the continuation of so called “Blue Laws” that restrict certain activities on Sundays. Originally used as a way for the government to compel colonists to attend church, most restrictions on whether stores can open, families can cook, or whether farmers can till their fields have long since been lifted. By the end of the 19th century, these restrictions began to be challenged by merchants’ associations and by 1970 only 25 states still had Blue Laws. This number had fallen to 13 by 1984.<sup>i</sup> Today, regardless of whether one believes it should be the government’s role to encourage church attendance, it is interesting to note that states that allow Sunday hunting actually have the highest rates of church attendance in the country.

## States with Restrictions or Prohibition on Sunday Hunting

- Connecticut
- Maine
- Maryland
- Massachusetts
- New Jersey
- Pennsylvania

Unfortunately for hunters and their families, 6 states continue to restrict hunting on Sundays, with 3 prohibiting hunting on Sundays all together. Despite recent victories secured by the National Shooting Sports Foundation and the Sunday Hunting Coalition, more needs to be done to remove antiquated and unnecessary government restrictions on Sunday hunting.<sup>ii</sup>

## RESTRICTS CONSERVATION EFFORTS

Wildlife conservation is funded in part by the sale of hunting licenses, as well as the sale of firearms and ammunition. Some states that restrict Sunday hunting are seeing a decrease in hunting license sales as hunters choose to travel to neighboring states for weekend hunting trips.

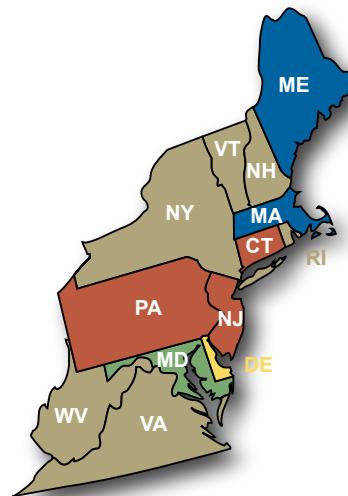
## RESTRAINS ECONOMIC GROWTH

Allowing hunting on Sundays would lead to a boost in state economies. If all 6 states with limits or outright bans on Sunday hunting were to eliminate these outdated restrictions and simply allow hunting on all Sundays within the dates of the current hunting season, it is estimated that up to 27,000 new jobs would be created. These are good jobs, paying roughly \$730 million in wages, and contributing about \$2.2 billion in additional economic activity to these states.<sup>iii</sup>

## LIMITS CHOICES OF HUNTERS AND FAMILIES

Today many families face busy schedules with long work weeks and weekend extracurricular activities for children on Saturdays. For hunters that see the importance of keeping the tradition of hunting alive for future generations, limiting the time available to hunt alone or with their families is a hindrance. Even for those that would choose not to hunt on Sundays, lifting the government restriction grants all the option to enjoy this activity without artificial schedules imposed.

Sportsmen and women understand the value of being free to choose if and when to hunt during the hunting season, just as Americans are free to decide to participate in other recreational activities such as fishing or boating on Sundays. The current restrictions are supported by extremist animal rights groups and gun control activists who see upholding outdated rules as a way to limit and eventually ban all hunting every day of the week.



- [tan square] Sunday hunting permitted
- [yellow square] Sunday hunting on private land only
- [green square] Sunday hunting allowed in some counties
- [orange square] Sunday hunting allowed in limited instances
- [blue square] Sunday hunting prohibited
- [tan square] Sunday hunting is permitted in all states not shown

## RECENT VICTORIES

The National Shooting Sports Foundation and the Sunday Hunting Coalition it helped to form have made great strides in recent years in efforts to repeal the colonial-era restrictions Sunday hunting.

- **Delaware:** In 2016, Gov. Jack Markell signed into law a bill that allows for deer hunting on five Sundays during hunting season at the discretion of private property owners. The measure also allows hunting on certain public lands.
- **Maryland:** In 2014, Sunday deer hunting was expanded on designated public land in four western Maryland counties that already allowed deer hunting on private land. While migratory birds remain closed to hunting throughout the state on Sundays, many counties have been chipping away at the prohibitions on Sunday hunting when it comes to deer, turkey, and small game. Year after year, local county bills are introduced and ultimately passed allowing for more hunting opportunities on Sundays throughout the state.
- **North Carolina:** In 2015, lawmakers approved a measure to lift the ban on hunting on private property where the owner has given permission for hunting. Two years later, the governor signed into law a major expansion of Sunday Hunting. The new law allows the state Wildlife Resources Commission to create a process which could open more than 2 million acres of public land for Sunday Hunting. Among other provisions, the law also removed the blanket prohibition of hunting within counties that have a population greater than 700,000 people and requires any county wishing to “opt-out” of Sunday hunting to do so by a county-wide voter referendum. Unfortunately, as of May 2020, the state Wildlife Resources Commission has yet to open any public land for Sunday Hunting. NSSF continues to advocate for this important step forward.
- **Pennsylvania:** In 2019, Gov. Tom Wolf signed into law legislation that allows for Sunday Hunting one day during rifle deer season, one during statewide archery deer season and a third day to be selected by Pennsylvania’s Game Commission.
- **South Carolina:** Sunday hunting was long allowed to take place on private lands in South Carolina; however, those without access to private land were unable to take advantage of hunting on Sundays. NSSF and members of the Sunday Hunting Coalition worked with state Rep. Bobby Cox to introduce legislation in 2021 and 2022 to allow for Sunday hunting on public land. While the legislation did not advance through the legislative process, it did make more sportsmen and women more aware of the issue. This led the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources to propose regulations to allow for Sunday hunting to take place on eight Wildlife Management Areas and two National Forests during the 2023 hunting season. This is a substantial step forward for hunters and the creation of new hunting opportunities.
- **Virginia:** In 2014, legislation was enacted that allowed Sunday hunting on private land during designated hunting seasons by hunters who have the written permission of landowners. Among other provisions, it prohibited hunting within 200 yards of a place of worship. In 2022, following years of hard work by NSSF and partner organizations, Gov. Glenn Youngkin, signed SB 8, which opened nearly million acres of public land for Sunday hunting.
- **West Virginia:** In 2014, a grassroots effort put the question before voters in seven counties for the first time in more than a decade and obtained approval for Sunday hunting on private property in five counties. In 2016, voters approved Sunday hunting on the ballot in 11 counties — paving the way for a state-wide legislative effort in 2017. The NSSF-led efforts secured a major victory in 2017 when a law was enacted to allow Sunday hunting on private land, with written permission, in all 55 counties. In 2018, NSSF built on the private land victory and worked with grassroots partners to secure Sunday hunting on public lands as well. As of June 2018, hunting on Sundays is permitted throughout the state.

i Price, Jamie and Bruce Yandle, Labor Markets and Sunday Closing Laws, *Journal of Labor Research*, 8:4, Fall 1987.

ii For members of the Sunday Hunting Coalition, visit: <http://sundayhunting.org/coalition/>

iii “The Economic Impact of Sunday Hunting,” analysis prepared for the National Shooting Sports Foundation by John Dunham and Associates, New York.  
[http://sundayhunting.org/PDF/SundayHunting\\_EconomicImpact.pdf](http://sundayhunting.org/PDF/SundayHunting_EconomicImpact.pdf)

