SENATORS STEINBORN AND MOORES RENEW CALL TO BAN COYOTE KILLING CONTESTS IN NEW MEXICO

Santa Fe, N.M. – A bipartisan pair of state lawmakers have teamed up again to introduce legislation to ban coyote killing contests in New Mexico. Yesterday, Senate Bill 268 was reintroduced in the New Mexico legislature by Senator Jeff Steinborn (D-Las Cruces) and Senator Mark Moores (R-Albuquerque). Moores and Steinborn previously passed legislation through the State Senate in 2015. The measure aims to put a stop to the dozens of organized competitions held annually in New Mexico, in which participants compete for prizes for killing the most coyotes over a certain time period. Often special prizes are even given for killing the largest, smallest, youngest or largest coyote.

In killing contests, coyotes are typically lured into shooting range of competitors using electronic or manual devices mimicking the cries of distressed prey. Prizes frequently include cash, commemorative belt buckles, and firearms and other hunting equipment. These contests occur frequently across New Mexico on both private and public lands, including U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management and State Trust lands, though contest promoters rarely share with the public the locations where the contestants are shooting.

Since 2013, legislation has been introduced in the New Mexico Legislature to ban coyote killing contests. In 2015, New Mexico became the first state where a legislative chamber passed a bill banning coyote killing contests. Senate Bill 253, sponsored by Senator Moores and then-Representative Steinborn, passed the Senate by a bipartisan vote of 27-13. The two Senators hope to repeat that success in 2017.

“Mass killing of wildlife purely for the sake of killing is not an activity that we should allow in New Mexico,” said Senator Steinborn. “Our wildlife is part of what makes the Land of Enchantment special, and we should give them the respect and management oversight they deserve. The fact that these contests continue to be held in New Mexico is unacceptable, and I will do everything in my power to stop them.”

Senator Moores added, “These contests are just blood sports. All they are about is killing as many animals as you can, and not about protecting livestock or property. No one is trying to restrict landowners’ ability to kill offending coyotes, but celebrating mass killing is just not good wildlife management.”

New poll numbers

A new December 2016 poll\(^1\) conducted by Third Eye Strategies showed that, overall, New Mexico voters oppose killing contests by more than a two-to-one margin. A majority of people oppose killing contests regardless of age, ethnicity, sex, or region of the state in which they live. The strongest opponents of the contests are Hispanic women, objecting to coyote killing contests by more than a five-to-one margin.

\(^1\) Based on findings from a poll of 601 active registered voters who say they voted in the 2016 general elections, conducted by live callers calling both cell phone and landline numbers.
Supporters of Senate Bill 268 assert that coyote killing contests are unethical, wasteful, and a violation of the fair-chase hunting principle. Further, scientific studies show indiscriminate mass killing of coyotes is an inefficient and even counter-productive population management technique—actually increasing coyote populations and risking more damage to New Mexico’s rural economy.

Jessica Johnson, Chief Legislative Officer for Animal Protection Voters, said, “A coalition of organizations has worked to educate the public about coyote killing contests, and New Mexicans are shocked to learn these senseless and cruel activities exist right in our backyard. New Mexicans do not support the indiscriminate killing of our state’s wildlife, and it’s time our laws reflect the public’s opposition to this gruesome blood sport.”

Animal Protection Voters is joined in supporting Senate Bill 268 by Southwest Environmental Center, Sierra Club, Conservation Voters New Mexico, Project Coyote, and WildEarth Guardians.

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