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Dear Editors,

The Bill to allow hunters to use dogs for trophy hunting cougars is still alive in the Legislature, in spite of the fact that 63% of Washington citizens voted against hounding in 1996. A 2008 Fish & Wildlife survey showed that only 33% of Washington residents support hounding, but for some reason legislators seem to be going against their constituents to support a small lobby. Proponents tout the Bill (SSB5356) as a safety issue, but it is not to hunt problem cats, but any random cougar. Current law supports depredation and safety hunting with hounds.

Dr. Rob Weilgus, Director of the Large Carnivore Conservation Lab at WSU states in an article "Our [cougar] management actions are achieving the exact reverse of what is desired. It's the shift in the age structure that results in the increased complaints. It's just disastrous. The heavy hunting that we're doing in Washington State is causing increased human-cougar conflicts. The putative solution is causing the problem."

We do not allow dog owners to pit their dogs against each other, but some legislators seem willing to let hunters pit their dogs against cougars, even though it acerbates human/cougar conflicts, according to scientists, and even though it defies their constituents. SSB5356's purpose is to allow trophy hunting, which is much easier with hounds--although perhaps not for the dog.

The House floor vote may be as early as this week Please call Representative Jay Rodne (360) 786-7852 and Representative Glenn Anderson (360) 786-7876 today to ask them to Vote NO on SSB5356 "Hunting cougars with the aid of dogs."

Bob McCoy
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