

**TESTIMONY OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF INLAND FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE
BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON INLAND
FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE
IN OPPOSITION TO L.D. 306**

**An Act To Exempt Members of the Penobscot Nation, the
Passamaquoddy Tribe, the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians and the
Aroostook Band of Micmacs from the Special Training Requirements
for Archery and Trapping**

SPONSORED BY: Representative MITCHELL of the Penobscot Nation

CO-SPONSORED BY: Senator CAIN of Penobscot
Representative CHAPMAN of Brooksville
Representative CHIPMAN of Portland
Representative GOODE of Bangor
Representative MOONEN of Portland
Representative PEOPLES of Westbrook
Representative SOCTOMAH of the Passamaquoddy Tribe
Representative VEROW of Brewer
Representative VILLA of Harrison

DATE OF HEARING: April 30, 2013

Good afternoon Senator Dutremble, Representative Shaw and members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee. I am Michael Sawyer, Supervisor of the Recreational Safety Unit at the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, speaking in opposition to **L. D. 306**.

Maine has a long history of educating sporting enthusiasts who participate in trapping, firearms hunting, bow hunting, and crossbow hunting. Trapper education became mandatory in 1988, bow hunter education became mandatory in 1990, and crossbow education became mandatory in 2006. These requirements were put in place to ensure that hunters and trappers gained knowledge of the respective endeavors in regards to proper equipment, safety practices, ethical behavior, landowner relations, laws, and many other items.

All of these training programs adhere to standards recognized at a national level and can be provided during the work session. These standards outline the learning objectives and require the attendee to engage in demonstrations or activities while at the class.

Over the years, the Safety Division has worked closely with representatives from the Maine Trapper's Association as well as the Maine Bowhunter's Association to ensure that these courses are relevant to the issues and practices of each discipline. Due to adherence to these safety course standards a graduate is able to purchase a license for their respective endeavor in Maine as well as in other states and provinces.

The legislature has recognized that some participants will have prior experience in a respective sport as a junior hunter or trapper or as a member of a family or group that regularly participated in the activity. Still the legislature enacted these training requirements so that all participants would be trained to the same level regardless of experience. Given the number of licensed applicants and the large geography of the state it would pose a significant challenge to ascertain the level of prior knowledge of any student or group of students. To exempt any person or group of people could create challenges in meeting these requirements. Additionally since the inception of the safety courses the number of fatalities and non-fatal hunting related accidents have been reduced significantly therefore the Department opposes any user group being exempt from the safety courses. The Department is always willing to explore avenues or work collaboratively to provide greater access or opportunity for tribal members to have these courses offered to them.

It is important to note that landowners, other hunters and trappers, and the public have come to expect that all participants will be graduates of the training program for the respective sport they are going to engage in. This training effort has helped to ensure that participants know about best management practices for harvesting and caring for game, equipment selection, law requirements, expectations as a responsible and ethical participant, survival and first aid, and personal safety.

I would be glad to answer any questions at this time.