



**THE LEAGUE
OF
HUMANE VOTERS®
OF NEW YORK**

POLITICAL ACTION FOR ANIMALS

MEMORANDUM OF OPPOSITION (2/17/2022)

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**THE LEAGUE OF HUMANE VOTERS®/NY (LOHV®/NY)
STRONGLY OPPOSES RAISING PHEASANTS TO BE SHOT**

In response to the DEC'S press release:

<https://www.dec.ny.gov/press/124653.html#:~:text=New%20York%20State%20Department%20of,the%20State's%20fall%20hunting%20opportunities.>

The background below is not a digression; it's vital to understanding the government entity that engages in, and promotes, the rearing of pheasants for the sole purpose of killing them.

If one were to look at an organizational chart of the DEC, it would take a while to find the Bureau of Wildlife (BOW). At some point, it would be seen under the Division of Wildlife and not given much thought. Yet, it is *the* bureau that encourages families and children to raise pheasant chicks to be shot by those who have a hunting permit. BOW needs to be identified as it remains largely out of sight and protected from scrutiny.

BOW's primary purpose is to manage wild animals for hunting. Killing animals for "sport" is not just fun and games for less than 3% of New York's population; it's serious business that works hand-in-glove with the firearms industry. **BOW is the government entity that the firearms industry funds to increase wildlife populations and provide hunting opportunities. At the same time, hunters, through their purchase of firearms and ammunition, bows and arrows, and crossbows and bolts, increase the revenue of the weapons industry.** Yet, BOW remains in the shadows as the DEC stands in the spotlight using euphemisms to tout BOW's programs. BOW who?

The inextricable relationship between BOW and the firearms industry came about after the Pittman-Robertson Act of 1937 was approved by Congress. The P-R Act placed a dedicated excise tax on "sporting" firearms and ammunition; it was later amended to include bows and arrows, and crossbows and bolts. Game divisions in all states receive an apportionment of the weapons excise tax based on the number of hunting permits they sell and their land mass. **In case it was missed, legal "sporting" weapons in New York include semi-automatic handguns and rifles, such as AR-15s. In NY, semi-automatic rifles were mandated to be "safer" allowing a mere seven bullets to be shot in quick succession rather than thirty.**

In 2020, BOW's P-R apportionment was close to 16 million dollars - not one penny of which benefits the general public. The P-R Act requires that the apportionment be used *solely* to manage wildlife for hunting. Hunting, in turn, requires the purchase of firearms and ammo, bows and arrows, and crossbows and bolts, thus increasing the profits of the firearms industry.

In contrast, the excise taxes on alcohol and tobacco contribute to the General Fund. An analogy to the BOW model would be a Bureau of Smoking that receives funding from cigarette manufacturers to encourage more smoking for the purpose of increasing sales of cigarettes. How long would the public tolerate it?

We are unaware of any other division of government that is in a circular, self-serving relationship with a private industry, or that functions to benefit less than 3% of the NY public!

Using children and families to raise pheasants to be shot, while shocking to most New Yorkers, is “nothing new,” according to Reynold's Game Farm, a pheasant production facility that is owned by BOW. In a recent call to them, we were told that pheasant chick-rearing by families has been going on for about 100 years. It's "tradition"! **What's new is that it's just getting noticed!**

Thanks to a bill introduced by Assemblymember Linda Rosenthal: A01388 “Prohibits the state's participation in artificial pheasant propagation activities; closes any state-owned or operated pheasant production facility.”

Should the bill become law, Reynold’s Game Farm would be shut down. Thinking ahead, BOW is emulating the 4-H model of having children and others raise animals, in this case, pheasants, to be turned loose so they can be shot by hunters.

LOHV/NY believes that while the New York public will accept raising animals for food, it’s unlikely that they would view raising pheasant chicks for the pleasure of killing them in the same light. Add to that the realization that it enhances the profits of the firearms industry, and the program becomes repugnant. Nor would most New Yorkers agree that putting firearms into the hands of 12-year-olds is a normal “sport.” And for what purpose? To teach children that killing is fun? That they are serving the noble purpose of "restoring" wildlife? Using such terms as "conservation" in this context brings disgrace to the term itself, and we daresay to the DEC.

...And what effect does this have on children? An interesting article can be found here:

<https://sentientmedia.org/when-4-h-kids-choose-sanctuary-over-slaughter/>

...And what about the birds themselves? Just imagine the suffering of wounded birds who may not have been hit with shot in a vital organ and will continue to survive into the winter months when finally, and painfully, they succumb to the elements. That is not even the end of the nightmare, those birds in the process of dying are predated upon by birds of prey, while the pheasants who have died become carrion for vultures or other wildlife, then those animals become lead-poisoned. Just ask wildlife rehabilitators how heartbreaking it is to watch raptors die from lead poisoning. And what does all of the lead-shot that is scattered onto the land year after year do to groundwater and food for both wildlife and humans?

“Restoration” in wildlife management lingo does not mean bringing back endangered species, rather it means annually restoring the decimated populations caused by hunting in order to have sufficient victims for the following hunting season! Hunting of any species cannot be sustained without a continuing supply of individuals.

... the DEC's mission statement and goal are:

To conserve, improve and protect New York's natural resources and environment and to prevent, abate and control water, land and air pollution, in order to enhance the health, safety and welfare of the people of the state and their overall economic and social well-being.

DEC's goal is to achieve this mission through the simultaneous pursuit of environmental quality, public health, economic prosperity and social well-being, including environmental justice and the empowerment of individuals to participate in environmental decisions that affect their lives.

While noble in theory, we ask how the DEC's advocacy of producing pheasants, non-native birds, for hunters, as well as the unloading of lead shot into the environment for hunters' enjoyment and recreation can be reconciled with their mission.

Ensnconced within the DEC, BOW remains largely undercover and protected from scrutiny. It's difficult to find detailed reports of funding, but we have to assume that BOW is provided with taxpayer funding, if only for their costly overhead, advertising, promotion, legal costs, etc.

LOHV/NY urges full transparency of BOW's activities, their funding sources and expenditures. We also urge transparency of related DEC divisions that serve the purpose of BOW while still serving their own.

We ask the DEC to discontinue BOW's program of using children and families to raise pheasants to be shot as it is incompatible with their mission - as well as the sensibilities and ethics of most New Yorkers!



To see more about pheasant hunting:

<https://www.newyorkupstate.com/life-and-culture/erry-2018/10/722855ceb03454/7-things-upstate-ny-hunters-sh.html>

Video of how it's done!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?list=RDCMUCm3af9XtbGdk_TiQy1mYvbw&v=ZNpRAaTyhrc&feature=emb_rel_end

<https://www.wivb.com/news/new-york/new-york-pheasant-release-program-opens-applications/>

The Mission of the League of Humane Voters® (LOHV®) is to create, unite, and strengthen local political action committees, which work to enact animal-friendly legislation and elect candidates for public office who will use their votes and influence for animal protection.