

1 _____ BILL NO. _____

2 INTRODUCED BY _____

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4 A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: "AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE MONTANA HUNTERS FIRST ACT;
5 CREATING A STUDY OF IMPACTS ON MONTANA'S HUNTING SEASONS RELATED TO BLOCK
6 MANAGEMENT, SEASON STRUCTURE, AND RESIDENT AND NONRESIDENT LICENSE ALLOCATION;
7 ASSIGNING RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE STUDY TO THE DEPARTMENT OF FISH, WILDLIFE, AND
8 PARKS; DEFINING THE SCOPE OF THE STUDY; REQUIRING A PUBLISHED REPORT THAT INCLUDES
9 RECOMMENDATIONS; REQUIRING MANDATORY REPORTING OF HUNTING ACTIVITY BY HUNTERS OF
10 GAME ANIMALS; PROVIDING RULEMAKING AUTHORITY; AND PROVIDING EFFECTIVE DATES AND A
11 TERMINATION DATE."

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13 WHEREAS, there has been a steady growth in nonresident hunting license sales and hunting pressure
14 on publicly accessible lands; and

15 WHEREAS, Montana's significant population growth necessitates a detailed assessment of hunting
16 season structure after 40 years; and

17 WHEREAS, there has been a decline of roughly 1 million acres in the amount of private land enrolled in
18 the block management program over the past 10 years, concentrating hunters on smaller amounts of publicly
19 accessible lands; and

20 WHEREAS, hunter success rates have been steadily falling, while hunter use days have been steadily
21 increasing; and

22 WHEREAS, public sentiment indicates that Montana's wildlife resources are being strained by a variety
23 of factors; and

24 WHEREAS, landowner fatigue with the current hunting season structure relative to elk hunting
25 opportunities is setting in; and

26 WHEREAS, the wildlife of Montana belongs to all citizens; and

27 WHEREAS, the process of finding solutions to the issues surrounding the current management of
28 hunting seasons, including resident and nonresident license allocation, should include all stakeholders.

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2 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

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4 NEW SECTION. **Section 1. Short title.** [Sections 1 through 3] may be cited as the "Montana Hunters
5 First Act".

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7 NEW SECTION. **Section 2. Nonresident hunting impact study.** (1) The department shall conduct a
8 study of nonresident impacts on deer and elk hunting in the state and in each of the commission's
9 administrative regions.

10 (2) The study must utilize a range of data, including but not limited to hunter days, harvest
11 reporting, use of lands that are part of hunting access programs, hunting pressure on public lands, elk and deer
12 population trends, and licensing.

13 (3) Upon completion of the study, the department shall publish a report that is accessible to the
14 public. The report must include:

15 (a) a comprehensive assessment of the data as it relates to nonresident impacts on deer and elk
16 hunting in the state and in each of the commission's administrative regions;

17 (b) specific information about the methods used for collecting or acquiring data used in the report;
18 and

19 (c) the identification of specific issues for consideration by the legislature, department, and
20 commission concerning nonresident impacts on deer and elk hunting.

21 (4) The study and report must be completed by December 1, 2026.

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23 NEW SECTION. **Section 3. Mandatory reporting of hunting activity -- rulemaking.** (1) A person
24 who is issued a hunting license for a game animal as defined in 87-2-101 shall report to the department all of
25 the person's hunting activity for each animal.

26 (2) A person shall report all of the person's hunting activity for a game animal before the person is
27 eligible to purchase a new game animal hunting license in the following license year.

28 (3) The department may make rules to implement this section, including but not limited to reporting

1 systems, deadlines, and penalties.

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3 NEW SECTION. Section 4. Codification instruction. (1) [Sections 1 and 2] are intended to be
4 codified as an integral part of Title 87, chapter 1, part 2, and the provisions of Title 87, chapter 1, part 2, apply
5 to [sections 1 and 2].

6 (2) [Section 3] is intended to be codified as an integral part of Title 87, chapter 2, part 1, and the
7 provisions of Title 87, chapter 2, part 1, apply to [section 3].

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9 NEW SECTION. Section 5. Effective dates. (1) [Sections 1, 2, 4, 5, and 6] are effective on passage
10 and approval.

11 (2) [Section 3] is effective March 1, 2026.

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13 NEW SECTION. Section 6. Termination. [Section 2] terminates December 31, 2026.

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