



Press Release

Congressman George Miller (D-California, 7th District)
Committee on Education and Labor, Committee on Resources

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New Bill Would Stop Illegal Airborne Hunting of Alaskan Wolves and other Wildlife

Tuesday, September 25, 2007



WASHINGTON – Legislation introduced today would protect wolves, bears, and other wildlife from the illegal and inhumane practice of airborne hunting. The new bill would close a loophole in federal law that Alaska officials have exploited to permit individual hunters to shoot and kill nearly 700 wolves from aircraft in the past four years.

“It’s time to ground Alaska’s illegal and inhumane air assault on wolves,” said Congressman George Miller (D-CA), a leader in Congress on conservation and natural resource issues and author of the new bill. “The state of Alaska has been operating an airborne hunting program that not only ignores federal law but violates Alaskans’ and other Americans’ wishes. The PAW Act will help to protect our nation’s wildlife from the unethical and unfair practice of airborne hunting.”

The Protect America’s Wildlife Act, or PAW Act, was introduced by Miller along with Rep. John Dingell (D-MI), the dean of the House and floor manager of the debate on the original Airborne Hunting Act, and Rep. Norm Dicks (D-WA), the chair of the Interior Appropriations Subcommittee.

At a press conference on Capitol Hill, Miller was joined by Atka, a 5-year-old Arctic grey wolf, and two wildlife experts and advocates -- Joel Bennett, an Alaska resident and former member of the state’s Board of Game, and Rodger Schlickeisen, President of Defenders of Wildlife, a national conservation and environmental advocacy organization.

In response to public outcry over airborne wolf hunting in Alaska, Congress passed the Airborne Hunting Act in 1972 to prohibit shooting or harassing animals from aircraft. However, for the last several years, officials in Alaska have licensed people to shoot hundreds of wolves from aircraft under the guise of wildlife management and predator control but in clear violation of the intent of the federal ban.

In 1996 and again in 2000, Alaskans approved two popular ballot measures that banned airborne hunting in the state, but the state legislature largely overturned each of those measures.

Hunting wildlife from an aircraft violates wildlife management principles and the hunting rules of fair chase, as does the related practice of chasing animals in an aircraft until they are exhausted and then executing them on the ground, known as 'land and shoot.'

The PAW Act makes it clear that states can only conduct activities prohibited by the Airborne Hunting Act to respond to legitimate biological and other emergencies, not just to authorize otherwise-illegal hunting practices. The bill does not alter existing exceptions for the use of aircraft for animal control where land, livestock, water, pets, crops, or human health and safety are at risk.

The bill is numbered [H.R. 3663](#), and has been referred to the Committee on Natural Resources.

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