

APEX PREDATOR



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The battleground for hunting is once again shaping up in Sacramento. Those in the anti-hunting community are making another strong run against our community. They will bring their usual dirty tactics, underhanded emotional based appeals and outright lies to sway the votes their way. Sadly many of our own will complain that there is nothing we can do but seek to hunt elsewhere. Those who make that claim suffer from BHSD (Battered Hunter Stress Disorder).

Normally I understand those who suffer from BHSD. This state has been for far too long the epitome of a losing battle on many fronts. Many have viewed our situation as a replay of one of the many movies depicting General George Armstrong Custer's Last Stand at the Little Big Horn. This is used as the excuse to not do anything or to only complain about the situation.

The last year has seen a great many changes both here and across the nation politically—changes that herald a new battlefield and a new situation. Using the Hollywood metaphor we in the hunting community should and will be viewed as a group of rebels who struck the blow that turned the tide for our side. In other words, you are the rebel alliance and this is The Empire Strikes Back!

Hunting organizations, instructors, stores, and clubs have all been aligning with a single purpose to take back our ground. I hope you heard that. We are not just fighting to hold our position we are now fighting to take back what had been formally lost. Many of you are going to be scratching your heads right now asking, “now what is he talking about”?

The answer is simple...We won the White House, Senate and Congress and secured the Supreme Court. The National Rifle Association emptied its bank account to defeat the democrats to secure a court that among other things will look favorably upon our position. This came at a time when the future of the high court and lower courts are to have major appointments that will impact the next 40-60 years of jurisprudence in this country. The California Rifle & Pistol Association along with a coalition of hunting organizations throughout the state is initiating litigation to fight back and move forward



an agenda to advance hunting in this state. Most if not all of the legal actions would not have been possible had the elections of November 2016 gone the other way.

The California Hunting & Conservation Coalition (which is made up of the majority of stakeholders in the state that support hunting) is working in tandem with the CRPA and NRA to advance the sport of hunting at the Game Commission and working with the Department of Fish & Wildlife.

This fight needs people like you reading this article to stand and join us. We need people to become Hunter Education Instructors across this state. We have opened a training center in Orange County that has held full classes with waiting list for the past three months. That's right, there are more students than there are seats! That's a good problem and one that is easy to solve by getting more hunters to pass on their knowledge to a new generation of hunters.

In one of our classes we had a student from Canada, two from China and one from Central America. These are college-age students who were here to learn about our freedoms and obtain a license to hunt. They shared their stories during a break and I watched instructors and participants take their rights more seriously as these fellow would-be hunters explained how lucky Californians are.

Instead of feeling defeated we need to take the message of our freedom to hunt to everyone in the 90% of Californians who have not made up their mind to be hunters or approving of hunting (5%) versus those in the anti-camp (5%). To do that we need you to quit hiding in the closet every time someone brings up the subject of hunting.

Here's a helpful conversation guide to a couple of the most common conversation opportunities to share your story...

1. Vegan Opener

(These opportunities occur in grocery stores, farmer's markets, etc.)

Vegan: "These are great organic veggies!"

Hunter: "I love organic food too."

Vegan: "Really what's your favorite?"

Hunter: "I like my food with no additives or other harmful chemicals, that's why I only eat free range game animals."

In the above example, the person is not alienated but is taught to look at both of you having a shared goal of healthy eating. Most vegans and vegetarians respect those who want to move away from mass farm produced meat. All of a sudden they see you as neutral or an ally.

2. Animal Lover Opener

(These are infrequent)

Anti-Hunter: "Those deer are beautiful!"

Hunter: "I think so too."

Vegan: "I hate seeing deer hunted."

Hunter: "Did you know that hunting is used to manage the deer population to help them not just survive but thrive?"

Many animal lovers have been told

a pack of lies and make their decisions on an emotional level. Taking the time to show them you both want healthy deer populations for future generations is a positive. Educating them that hunting is a scientifically proven management tool with huge success rates brings them to a new understanding.

The point of this is that each of you have opportunities to teach, which multiplies our numbers. Be an ambassador by inviting friends and family over to a game meal. Many people change their mind over a good venison back strap or wild duck dinner. There are everyday conversations that if done right can move the people in the middle of the debate to understand our position and in many cases support us.

This year you have to ask yourself if you're going to stay home and help the opposition with your silence or if you're going to seize this opportunity and make a difference.

