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Hunting, Fishing and Trapping Amendment on November Ballot

In addition to voting for their chosen candidates and other important matters in the November 8, 2016 general election, voters will decide whether to amend the Kansas Constitution's Bill of Rights to add a constitutional right to hunt, fish and trap wildlife.

The proposed amendment would specify the people have a right to hunt, fish and trap by traditional methods, subject to reasonable laws and regulations that promote wildlife conservation and management and that preserve the future of hunting, fishing and trapping. The amendment would also specify that hunting and fishing are the preferred means for managing and controlling wildlife, and that the amendment shall not be construed to modify any provision of law relating to trespass, eminent domain or other private property rights.

The amendment would be created if approved by a majority of Kansas voters. A "Yes" vote will be a vote in favor of adding the amendment to the constitution, and a "No" vote will be a vote against adding the amendment. If the amendment passes, current laws and regulations governing hunting, fishing and trapping of wildlife would still apply, as the proposed right is subject to reasonable laws and regulations. If the amendment fails, there would be no changes to current laws and regulations.

The proposed amendment was introduced into the 2015 Legislative Session as House Concurrent Resolution (HCR) 5008 by Representative Couture-Lovelady and Representative Lusker, but no action was taken. It was carried over to the 2016 session where it passed both chambers by large margins. The Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism (KDWPT) testified in support of the resolution.

According to the website Ballotpedia.org, 19 states currently have similar constitutional provisions for the right to hunt and fish. Two others have constitutional provisions guaranteeing the right to fish, and two have statutes providing for the right to hunt and fish. Vermont established its right to hunt and fish in 1777, but most of the other states have created their rights since 2000.

Hunters and anglers provide all of the support for the state's wildlife and fisheries management programs. These programs are entirely funded by license/permit fees and a federal match from the excise tax paid by hunters and anglers on equipment they buy (these revenues can only be used to fund wildlife and fisheries programs; they cannot be used for state park maintenance). The state's share of the federal excise tax can only be returned to Kansas if someone buys a license or permit. KDWPT does not receive any state general funds for any of its programs.

For more information about the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism, visit KSOuthdoors.com or TravelKS.com.