

THE POLITICS OF CONSERVATION ELECTION 2024

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ELECTION 2024 - Want a Bright Future for Hunting? Do Your Scouting!

Every fall is important to those who hunt because that is when the hunting seasons for deer, and nearly all other game species, begin to open and at their best. But *this fall* is even more important for other reasons. On November 5th, we will elect the President, congressional and state representatives that will determine the course for our state and nation for the near future and far beyond.

Successful hunters begin their hunt months before they hit the field before dawn on opening day. They do their homework by determining where they want to hunt and putting in for their tags, then scouting the areas they have successfully drawn a tag for to learn the terrain, habitat, and the tendencies of the game they plan to pursue. If you take hunting seriously and want to maximize your chances of success, you leave absolutely nothing to chance. When it comes to who is elected to make decisions for our nation, and your state, you must be every bit as vigilant.

If you do not think that *who* is elected to office is important to you, your children, or the ability of future generations to enjoy our outdoor traditions, think again. Talk to the houndsman who can no longer use his hounds to pursue a bear or bobcat. Think about it when you are on the search for pricey and illusive “non-lead” ammo for your favorite rifle because traditional lead loads are illegal in our state, or give it thought when you pay an additional 11% excise tax next time you purchase a new rifle or box of ammo. Or perhaps it will sink in when you run into yet another newly locked gate this fall on the logging road which leads deep into that mountain you and your family have hunted for decades.

Yesterday, your ability to hunt was pretty much solely determined by the populations of the game species you wanted to pursue. Today, the greatest, and most immediate threat to hunting is not the health of game species, but rather political decisions made by the officials we elect. Who is elected in November will not only impact high profile issues such as our economy, our military, immigration, and our healthcare – *but also what you can hunt, where you can hunt, what you can hunt with, and possibly whether you can even hunt at all.*

Although the California Bowmen Hunters/State Archery Association (CBHSAA) would love to tell you exactly which candidates would fight hardest to protect and promote our outdoor heritage – because of our non-profit charitable status – we cannot. But we can provide you with some guidance to help you prepare for this November’s election with the same care and determination you are taking to prepare for this fall’s hunting season.

Register to Vote

First things first...to vote, you must be registered. If you are not registered to vote – *get registered*. Or maybe you think you are registered, but you’re not. Remember, you must *re-register* if you have moved, changed your name, or changed party affiliation. Every state except North Dakota requires people to register if they want to vote. In California, you must register 15 days before Election Day, but there are ways to conditionally register at any time up to and including Election Day. However, if you live outside California, depending on your state, your registration deadline could be as much as a month before an election.

Gonna be Hunting on Election Day?

If you will be on a hunting trip on November 5th, lucky you! But know that you can still have your voice heard by voting via absentee ballot. Requirements for voting by absentee ballot differ by state. In California, county elections officials mail vote-by-mail ballots to all active registered voters. But if you choose to vote-by-mail, your absentee ballot must be postmarked on or before Election Day and received by your county elections office no later than 17 days after Election Day. If you are not sure your absentee ballot will arrive in time if mailed, you or your designee can bring it to any polling place in the state between 7:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. on Election Day.

Choosing Who to Vote For

President, of course...

Arguably, the most important decision you will make this entire year will be who you vote for to be the next President of the United States. We all know that the President has final decision authority over any federal bill that passes through Congress – including legislation that may impact public access to public lands, science-based wildlife management, sporting arms and munitions, methods of take, and hunting opportunity in many other ways. But our next President can also make major decisions which directly impact hunting *without any input from Congress* via the power provided the office by the Constitution, or pursuant to Acts of Congress to enact Executive Orders (EO). For example, in the last few years alone, several new national monuments have been established via EO in California – severely reducing hunting access and opportunity to some of our most special hunting areas.

But the greatest and *longest lasting* legacy of our next President will likely result from any appointments they may make to the U.S. Supreme Court to fill the seat of any justice that may retire or pass during the next four years. Once confirmed by the U.S. Senate, *these appointments are for life*. In just the recent past alone, those seated on the Supreme Court have been tasked with making “final” decisions on such highly controversial topics as abortion, immigration, and, of course, our Second Amendment – just to list a few. In short, our next President will likely make decisions that will endure throughout the rest of our lifetimes, and for generations beyond.

But there's more...

Of course, we all know who is running for President and probably have a good feel for their respective positions on issues of importance. But you may not know who the candidates are who are running for California's open U.S. Senate seat, your congressional district, or to represent you in the California State Senate and Assembly. If you don't, do your scouting to learn who those candidates are, then evaluate them the same way you would research where you are putting in for your next big game tag. Watching debates is a good way to gather information on candidate's positions on high profile issues you care about. But you will have to dig much deeper than the debates, go on-line, watch the evening news or your local paper to find out a candidate's true feelings on hunting, animal-rights, science-based wildlife management, public access to public lands and other issues of importance to the conservation community.

Although not always possible, the best way to get the detailed information you want is to flat out ask them. With a little effort, you can almost always catch them at a town hall meeting, or another campaign stop and quiz them directly. If that's not possible, call or write to their office to get the answers to the questions you have. If they have held office before, or are the incumbent, check out their actual voting record on issues of importance. A candidate's voting history is public.

Depending on their non-profit status, some organizations will even post voting guides which provide information about a candidate's positions or voting record on different issues. As just one example, many pro-Second Amendment organizations will post details of a candidate's view or votes on gun control. But don't stop there, if you can't find what you need looking on the websites of those who are on our side,

look on the websites of those who aren't – several animal-rights organizations will also post information to promote those who *oppose* our heritage.

Finally, do not forget that our November 2024 California state ballot contains more than just candidates running for state or federal office. It also contains numerous propositions which will, in some way, impact you and the ones you love. As of August 9, 2024, eleven statewide ballot propositions have qualified for the November 2024 ballot in California. These include propositions which would increase drug crime and theft penalties, raise the minimum wage, issue billions of dollars in bonds to fund construction and modernization of public education facilities, state and local parks, environmental protection, water infrastructure and energy projects, and much more.

But do your homework and know what you are voting on. Although it may be lengthy and painful – be sure to fully read the language of what each proposition would do, as the titles of these proposals are carefully chosen and often intentionally misleading. As just one example, the title of Proposition 117 on the June 1990 California ballot was tamer named “Wildlife Protection. Initiative Statute.” Although the proposition's title did not even mention mountain lions, buried deep within the measure was language which designated the species as a “specially protected mammal” and prohibited them from being hunted, injured, possessed or sold.

Now Get Out and Vote!

Any way you slice it, our November 2024 election *will* frame the future of our outdoor heritage for the rest of our lives and beyond. Before November 5th, be sure that you have done all your scouting so you can be sure to cast your vote for a bright future for hunting on election day.

Author's Note: There are several good websites that will help make it easy for you to register to vote, check your registration status, apply for an absentee ballot, identify candidates for your area, and provide other useful information – www.sos.ca.gov/elections/, www.usvotefoundation.org, www.rockthevote.com/, www.vote.org/voter-registration-deadlines/, and www.vote411.org/ ...just to name a few. To check out voting records, go to www.Congress.gov and/or www.legislature.ca.gov/. Happy Hunting!