August 5, 2025

Governor J.B. Pritzker
Office of the Governor
401 S. Spring Street
Springfield, IL 62704

Dear Governor Pritzker

Safari Club International (SCI) opposes House Bill 2627 and the "rewilding" efforts specifically in regard to any forced introduction of apex predators onto the landscape.

SCI exists to protect the freedom to hunt and support sustainable-use wildlife conservation worldwide and is committed to sustainable wildlife management rooted in science.

While the pursuit of ecological restoration is laudable, Illinois' proposal to reintroduce apex predators through a rewilding framework risks replicating the serious economic, social, and ecological failures observed in similar reintroduction efforts, such as Colorado's ongoing wolf reintroduction program.

Following the narrow passage of Proposition 114 in 2020, Colorado began reintroducing gray wolves in December 2023 on the Western Slope. Within months, ranchers in North Park and neighboring counties experienced livestock and working-dog losses due to the newly introduced wolves. Conflicts escalated so quickly that wolf relocations became necessary, undermining both public trust and the program's credibility.

Economically, Colorado's forced reintroduction program has proven costly and unsustainable. As of earlier this year, the state has spent more than five million dollars on capture, transport, monitoring, compensation, and emergency mitigation. These expenditures will continue indefinitely because apex predator reintroduction is not a self-sustaining strategy in human-dominated landscapes. Instead, it demands perpetual government oversight, conflict management, and taxpayer funding that could be used for more effective conservation programs.

Illinois faces even greater challenges than Colorado. The state is characterized by dense human settlement, intensive agriculture, and fragmented natural corridors, leaving little room for free-ranging apex predators to thrive without conflict. Introducing high-conflict predators into such an environment would endanger livestock operations, impact highly sought after game species (specifically white-tailed deer in southern Illinois), generate rural-urban political tension, and require ongoing state expenditures to manage inevitable conflicts.

Meaningful wildlife and ecological restoration can be achieved through habitat improvements, voluntary landowner programs, and initiatives from the Department of Natural Resources that support biodiversity without imposing the chronic burdens of predator introduction. Illinois should avoid repeating the mistakes of other states and instead focus on science-based, cooperative conservation efforts that respect both wildlife and the people who live alongside it.

For these reasons, Safari Club International respectfully requests that you reject the proposed rewilding legislation and veto House Bill 2627.

Thank you for your consideration of our perspective.

Sincerely,

W. Laird Hamberlin, CEO – Safari Club International/Foundation

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