

**Southwest Environmental Center □ Animal Protection Voters
Sierra Club: Rio Grande Chapter □ Project Coyote □ WildEarth Guardians
Wildlife Conservation Advocacy Southwest**

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**Wildlife Advocates Vow to Keep Pushing
for Ban on Killing Contests**

Santa Fe, NM – Wildlife advocates will not give up efforts to ban wildlife killing contests in New Mexico despite today's 8-2 vote to table SB253 by the House Agriculture, Water and Wildlife Committee. The measure, sponsored by Senator Mark Moores (R-Albuquerque) and Representative Jeff Steinborn (D-Las Cruces), prohibits coyote killing contests. The bill passed the full state Senate by a decisive 27-13 bipartisan vote.

The House Committee's vote came on the heels of its vote earlier in the morning to kill a bill (HB426) that would have banned trapping and poisoning on public lands, also by 8-2 vote.

"Today's vote on SB253 only delays the inevitable," said Kevin Bixby, executive director of the Southwest Environmental Center. "The issue of wildlife killing contests is not going away. The overwhelming majority of New Mexicans are horrified by contests that reward the gratuitous killing of animals. Even members of the House Ag Committee cannot ignore the will of the people forever."

"Most New Mexicans are appalled by coyote killing contests and want to see them banned in our state," said Lisa Jennings, executive director of Animal Protection Voters. "Like past successful efforts to prohibit cockfighting and dogfighting in New Mexico, we will continue to shine a bright light on these ugly and embarrassing spectacles that destroy wildlife, send a dangerous message to our children, and harm our state's reputation."

Wildlife killing contests are organized events in which participants compete for prizes by attempting to kill the most animals over a certain time period. Coyotes are the most common target. At least 20 wildlife killing contests were held in New Mexico between August 2013 and July 2014, according to data provided by Wildlife Conservation Advocacy Southwest, placing the "Land of Enchantment" at the top of the list of all states.

"We are disappointed that when the Republicans gained control of the House, wildlife issues were incorporated into the House Agriculture committee," said Mary Katherine Ray, wildlife chair for the Rio Grande Chapter Sierra Club. "Agriculture interests can be at odds with wildlife conservation as we saw today."

“We are disappointed by the defeat of SB 253,” said Guy Dicharry, co-founder of Wildlife Conservation Advocacy Southwest. “The practice of killing native wildlife solely for prizes and entertainment has served only to perpetuate inaccurate and negative stereotypes of the entire hunting community. Hunters and anglers have always been a big part of modern wildlife conservation. The proposed legislation emphasized wildlife science over “whack ‘em and stack ‘em” rhetoric. It is unfortunate that a majority of the committee chose to remind everyone that New Mexico is not ready to join the 21st century.”

“Today’s vote reflects the narrow views of House Ag Committee members and not public sentiment,” said Judy Paulsen, NM Representative of Project Coyote. “Wildlife killing contests are out of synch with the attitudes of most New Mexicans, and undermine the economic contribution of non-consumptive users of wildlife who account for \$328 million in annual expenditures.”

“New Mexico will not truly embody the state’s motto ‘the Land of Enchantment’ until we put a stop to cruel practices including wildlife killing contests,” said Bethany Cotton, wildlife program director for WildEarth Guardians. “Committee members missed a golden opportunity to repair New Mexico’s tarnished reputation today, instead turning their back on overwhelming public opinion and sound science.”

Coyotes are key parts of healthy, functioning ecosystems. Killing contests devalue native wildlife and glorify wasteful killing, while disrupting natural processes. Wildlife killing contests ignore the ecological value of the target species, and can actually exacerbate conflicts with livestock. Peer reviewed studies on coyotes and wolves demonstrate this result.

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