

Senator Bernie Sanders, Chair
Senate Committee on
Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC, 20510

Senator Bill Cassidy, Ranking Member
Senate Committee on
Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
428 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, DC, 20510

Rep. Virginia Foxx, Chair
Committee on Education and the Workforce
U.S. House of Representatives
2176 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Rep. Bobby Scott, Ranking Member
Committee on Education and the Workforce
U.S. House of Representatives
2176 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

July 30, 2024

Dear Senator Sanders, Senator Cassidy, Representative Fox, and Representative Scott:

The undersigned organizations, representing millions of hunters, anglers, wildlife professionals, and outdoor enthusiasts write to express our support for H.R. 6128 / S. 2914, the Outdoor Recreational Outfitting and Guiding Act. This bill will help enhance outdoor recreation experiences on hundreds of millions of acres of federal lands. This bill will keep small outfitting and guiding businesses in business. We respectfully request that you prioritize consideration of these bills, including a hearing, before the end of this Congress.

The Outdoor Recreational Outfitting and Guiding Act reinstates a longstanding exemption for seasonal outfitting and guiding businesses operating on federal lands from federal minimum wage and, most importantly, overtime requirements. A 2021 Executive Order and Department of Labor (DOL) regulation rescinded this longstanding exemption. The DOL regulation will shut down hundreds of small outdoor recreational businesses and put independent guides out of work—and consequently bar many Americans from participating in transformative outdoor recreational experiences on federal lands.

Outfitters and guides are the gateway to the outdoors. Few people have the experience or means to spend a week, on their own, whitewater rafting or hunting in remote and unspoiled public lands. These outdoor experiences allow people to unplug from technology and reattune to nature. But because the DOL regulation will unnecessarily increase outfitters' operating costs, it will shut them down or force them to raise prices. Higher prices mean most Americans will not be able to afford these experiences—especially families already feeling the effects of inflation.

Seasonal recreational outfitters have little ability to control overtime costs. Most offer multi-day trips that quickly exceed a 40-hour week. They cannot replace specialized guides with additional shifts, especially when operating in remote areas. Further, most guides wish to maximize their income in short operating seasons. They do not consider themselves to be working “overtime” and typically try to stack up as many trips as possible, leaving themselves free to pursue other interests during the rest of the year.

The Outdoor Recreational Outfitting and Guiding Act will exempt employees engaged in seasonal outdoor recreational outfitting or guiding services on federal lands from minimum wage and overtime obligations. Importantly, these employees are already typically compensated at or above minimum wage. Their pay structures include compensation from daily rates, room and board, training, and tips. The Act allows seasonal outfitting businesses to avoid unnecessary compliance costs and to keep their prices reasonable. This keeps guides employed, and it keeps access open for thousands of Americans who wish to enjoy affordable outdoor experiences on federal lands.

For these reasons, we strongly support the Outdoor Recreational Outfitting and Guiding Act. It remains before your Committees without much movement. We respectfully request a hearing and vote on the Act as quickly as possible, and before the end of the 118th Congress.

Thank you for your leadership on this issue.

Sincerely,

Archery Trade Association
Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies
Boone and Crockett Club
California Waterfowl Association
Catch-A-Dream Foundation
Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation
Conservation Force
Dallas Safari Club
Ducks Unlimited
Houston Safari Club
Masters of Foxhounds Association
National Bobwhite & Grassland Initiative
National Deer Association
National Rifle Association
National Shooting Sports Foundation
National Wild Turkey Federation
North American Falconers Association
Pope and Young Club
Professional Guides and Outfitters of America
Public Lands Foundation
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
Safari Club International
Sportsmen's Alliance
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
Whitetails Unlimited
Wild Sheep Foundation
Wildlife Forever
Wildlife Mississippi