

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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Senate Joint Resolution 20 - Sponsor Statement

“Urging the United States Congress to pass the Hearing Protection Act.”

Noise-induced hearing loss (NIHL) and tinnitus are significant health problems among adults across the United States. Despite the widespread availability of traditional hearing protection devices like earplugs and earmuffs, these preventable hearing conditions are often the result of firearm noise exposure. When they do occur, they can cause a significant negative impact in the quality of life to those affected by them.

Studies from the CDC and NIOSH have shown that the use of noise suppressors on firearms can help protect against hearing loss. That is why the National Hearing Conservation Association recommends their use as a tool to mitigate the risk of hearing damage.

For safety and sporting purposes, the majority of hunters do not want to sacrifice their auditory situational awareness by wearing traditional hearing protection devices in the field. Suppressors are the only tool that reduces the noise at the source, making the concussion of a gunshot less dangerous for the hunter and everyone around them. This is especially true for hunting dogs, whose ears are far more sensitive than their human counterparts and all the more important for younger hunters and guides who are accompanying a hunter in the field.

While the words silencer and suppressor are often used interchangeably, it is important to note that nothing can completely silence gunshots. The quietest “silenced” gunshot is still as loud as a jackhammer striking concrete. However, a firearm suppressor can reduce the sound signature by an average of 20 to 35 dB, roughly the same as earplugs or earmuffs.

The Hearing Protection Act was first introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives in 2015 and in the Senate in 2017. If enacted, it would remove suppressors from the purview of the National Firearms Act and reclassify them as Title 1 firearms. Doing so would eliminate the superfluous barriers to entry that in no way enhance public safety, while still requiring purchasers to submit a Form 4473 and pass an FBI background check when purchasing through a dealer.

Its passage would also result in the largest increase of Pittman-Robertson funding in decades, adding tens of millions of dollars to the aggregate budgets of our nation’s state wildlife agencies for the management of wildlife resources.

SJR 20 urges congress to enact the Hearing Protection Act and enable the 100+ million law-abiding gunowners across our country to take an extra preventative measure for their health without endangering the safety of the general public.