

HB603 is an unnecessary act of legislation because the current trapping laws are sufficient. Many items in the bill 603 are already followed by responsible trappers, the other limits are a start for anti-trappers to outlaw furbearer management.

Reporting a captured pet does not need to be made law. Of course, it is the trappers responsibility to return it, or make every effort to notify the owners. That is common sense. However, if a pet is not tagged, how is anyone supposed to know who it belongs to; also, if it is very far from home, it is obviously roaming and getting into mischief. It is unfortunate when non-targeted animals are caught in traps, but don't take the rights away from the trappers. We don't limit driving because peoples' dogs and cats are continually getting run over; it is not the drivers fault, the pet owner should have kept their animal on their own property.

There is already a law requiring that all ground sets using a body gripping trap, be at least 30 feet away from all cross country ski trails, hiking trails, and public roads. If trap locations have to be publically posted, it will hurt the trappers as animal rights activists are likely to come in and destroy the sets, and possibly steal the traps.

A 48 hour mandatory trap check is an unnecessary law. Current trapping regulations state "Traps should be checked at least once every 48 hours." Changing this to say "Traps MUST be checked at least once every 48 hours ." won't make an irresponsible person do so if they are not already. Also, in many cases it is not necessary to have to check your traps even that often. Snares, body grippers, and water sets are made to dispatch the animal quickly, so they do not need to be checked so often. However, dry land sets using foot-hold traps are checked by their owners at least every other day. Trappers try to be very careful and courteous because they know that the anti-trappers, just like anti-hunters, are waiting for any reason to try to outlaw what we do.

I don't think that a trapper education program should be mandatory. There is already a free Trapper Education Program offered by the Montana Trappers Association with help from Fish, Wildlife, and Parks; and it is not funded by tax dollars. To involve the National program means the class would be taught by people who are not even trappers. That's just what the anti-trappers want! There is also a weekend long Youth Trapping Camp offered by the Montana Trappers Association for a very low fee. Last year my dad took 3 of us boys, and we learned a lot of useful information. But the very best way to learn about trapping is to go on a trap-line with an experienced trapper - you learn stuff you could never learn in a classroom. My Grampa trapped for years, so he came up and ran our trap-line with us and gave us some cautions, hints, and hands-on help making more effective and safe sets.

The items in HB603 do not need to be made law, they are just a way for the anti-trappers to get in and keep making the laws more restrictive until trapping is impossible. The current trapping laws work very well. Please vote AGAINST HB603.

Thank You,

Greg Ticknor, age 15

4910 Silver Creek Rd.

Helena, mt 59602