SCI
FIRST FOR HUNTERS®

HUNTER ADVOCACY

First Quarter FY2026
July - September



SCI Government Affairs in Action

State & Local

Federal

International

Legal

Guides & Outfitters

Hunter Information Service

AN INTRODUCTION FROM VP OF GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS CHRIS TYMESON

At Safari Club International, our mission to protect the freedom to hunt and promote wildlife conservation is not just a tagline—it is a daily, deliberate commitment that demands vigilance, strategy, and action. Nowhere is this more evident than in our advocacy efforts.

Every regulation, every bill, every courtroom decision that impacts hunting rights or wildlife management is a line in the story we are writing together. Whether we are pushing back on unjust trophy import bans, defending sustainable use at international conventions, or challenging misguided proposals that would restrict access to public lands, our advocacy team is on the front lines.

This quarterly report provides a snapshot of that work, what we have accomplished, what challenges remain, and where we are headed. Behind each policy win or legislative push is a team of professionals working with lawmakers, agency leaders, international allies, and fellow conservation organizations to defend science-based wildlife management and your right to hunt.

But advocacy is not just about what happens in Washington or in courtrooms. It is also about engagement from SCI members, chapters, and volunteers who write, call, and show up. You amplify our voice and turn our policy positions into political action.

We are making progress. In just the past quarter, we helped successfully reopen the hunting season for black bears in Florida, met with key members of the current administration to underscore our priorities at the federal level, expanded our footprint around the globe with greater engagement of non-US chapters, and stood firm against efforts to politicize wildlife science. But we cannot let up. The threats are persistent, and our opposition is organized and well-funded.

As you review this report, I encourage you to take pride in how far we have come and prepare for the work ahead. We are the first and most effective voice for hunters worldwide and with your support, we intend to stay that way.

In the fight for our hunting heritage,



Chris Tymeson, J.D.
Vice President of Government Affairs
Safari Club International

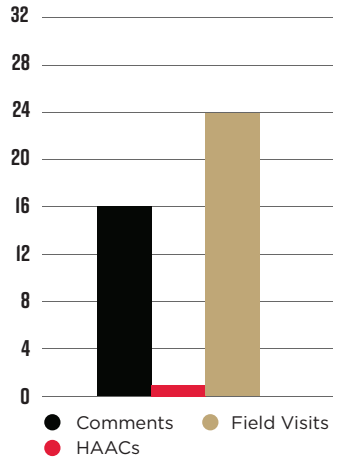
Q1 FY2026 REPORT

SCI FIRST FOR HUNTERS®

STATE & LOCAL

WINS

1. **Florida Black Bear Hunting Returns.** In August, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission approved a highly regulated and science-based black bear hunt by a 5-0 vote. This is the first bear hunt in a decade and much needed in the state with the second-most human-bear conflicts (after Connecticut, which does not allow black bear hunting). SCI strongly supported the hunt by having professional staff and in-state chapter leaders testify in person at the May and August Commission meetings, submitting formal written support for the proposal, providing grassroots support, and promoting the issue through traditional and social media. SCI continues to support the hunt by defending the Commission in court. Bear Warriors United, a Florida-based group, immediately challenged the hunt, and SCI's legal team has filed a Motion to Intervene in the case (see below).
2. **SCI Welcomes New Western State & Local Liaison.** SCI proudly welcomes Keely Hopkins, a seasoned government relations professional and licensed attorney with over a decade of experience in wildlife management, conservation, and firearms policy, as its new State and Local Liaison for the West. An avid hunter, Hopkins has pursued game species across North America and recently completed her first South African hunt.
3. **SCI Supports Nebraska Mountain Lion Season.** SCI submitted two comments in support of the expansion of the mountain lion season in Nebraska. Despite anti-hunting opposition, the Commission voted in favor of the expansion.
4. **SCI Applauds AFWA Resolution on Predator Management.** At its annual meeting, the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, representing the wildlife authorities of all 50 U.S. States, adopted a resolution in support of predator hunting and management efforts. SCI was an instigator and initial proponent of this resolution, and we applaud AFWA for acknowledging the critical role of predator hunting and management activities in balancing wildlife populations.
5. **SCI Represents Hunters at AFWA.** Advocacy staff made a strong showing at the 115th Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies annual meeting in Tucson, Arizona. Led by Vice President for Government Affairs Chris Tymeson, SCI's team presented at several meetings and networked with agency directors, federal staff, and conservation partners.



LOSSES

1. **Michigan Coyote Season Not Yet Reopened.** The Michigan Natural Resource Commission voted last year to close the previously year-round coyote season for three months, during the denning season, based on alleged "negative perceptions" by non-hunters. Upon re-visiting the issue in August, the Commission adopted a resolution to treat coyotes and beavers as nuisance species instead of reinstating year-round coyote hunting.

THREATS

1. **New York Trophy Ban Lingers On.** With the adjournment of New York's General Assembly, two longstanding SCI priorities are officially done for this year. Neither the perennial "Big Five African Trophies Act" (SB 5014) nor an attempt to restrict the use of traditional lead ammunition moved forward. Unfortunately, the "Big Five African Trophies Act" passed the Senate earlier this session and will be available for the House Environmental Conservation Committee to take up when legislators return to Albany in early 2026.
2. **Anti-Hunters Continue to Press "Ballot Box Biology" in the West.** Anti-hunting groups continue to capitalize on the democratic processes of Western States to push anti-hunting and animal rights agendas. A voter initiative in Colorado, IP 98, would create an alternative wildlife commission that would de-emphasize hunting, fishing, and trapping as legitimate tools for wildlife management and would encourage "re-wilding." An initiative in Oregon, IP 28, would criminalize the injuring or killing of animals, including killing for food, hunting, and fishing.

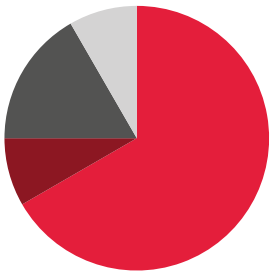
Q1 FY2026 REPORT

SCI
FIRST FOR HUNTERS®

FEDERAL

WINS

1. **SCI Meets with Secretary Burgum.** In August, SCI CEO Laird Hamberlin and Advocacy Staff met with U.S. Secretary of the Interior Doug Burgum to discuss SCI's top priorities for the Interior Department, including modernizing the Endangered Species Act, increasing and protecting hunting access on public lands, and improving and supporting international conservation efforts. The Secretary was receptive to these priorities, and we look forward to continued partnership on behalf of American hunters.
2. **SCI Meets with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director Nesvik.** SCI President Jeff Meyerl, along with former SCI President Sven Lindquist and SCI staff, met with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director Brian Nesvik and Senior Advisor to the Director Josh Coursey in September. Director Nesvik discussed SCI's top priorities for the Service, including wolf and grizzly bear delisting and rescinding import permit requirements, and pledged to continue to work with SCI on issues of importance for hunters.
3. **Two Major SCI Priorities Passed Through Committee.** SCI celebrated the passage of two of our priority bills through the House Natural Resources Committee: H.R. 281, the Grizzly Bear State Management Act, introduced by Rep. Harriett Hageman (R-WY), which would delist the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem population of grizzly bears from the Endangered Species Act; and H.R. 556, the Protecting Access for Hunters and Anglers Act, which would prohibit bans on lead ammunition and tackle on public lands without sufficient scientific evidence. Both bills expand hunting access and rely on science-based decision-making, which are hallmarks of SCI's advocacy.
4. **New Government Affairs Coordinator.** The Advocacy team welcomed Christopher Gomes as the new Government Affairs Coordinator based out of Washington, DC. A waterfowl and upland game hunter originally from San Diego, Christopher has hit the ground running and fit in seamlessly with the team.
5. **SCI Sees Progress with the State Department.** Advocacy staff have lobbied the State Department for changes in suppressor regulation, visa processing, and other issues. We have had several meetings with State Department staff and seen significant progress on our requests, as well as a new collaboration with the Anti-Wildlife Trafficking Team. We look forward to continued partnership with the State Department.



Hunters' Embassy™ Events
10 Different Members of Congress Attended These Events

- Congressional Fundraisers (8)
- Hunt Club Roundtable (1)
- Lunch & Learns (2)
- Industry Roundtable (1)

LOSSES

1. **Government Shutdown Threatens Hunting Access.** While SCI successfully lobbied for the inclusion of several major priorities into the FY26 Interior Appropriations package, Republicans and Democrats were unable to reach a deal to pass the bills and fund the government. While public lands remain open at present, a prolonged government shutdown risks hunting closures as well as disruption of international permitting.

THREATS

1. **Public Land Sales Remain on the Horizon.** Facing proposals to sell off public lands through the budget reconciliation process, over one thousand SCI members opposed the proposal in communications to their representatives in DC. While public land sales were ultimately kept out of the final "One Big Beautiful Bill", we expect to see other public land sale proposals brought forward in this Congress.

Q1 FY2026 REPORT

SCI FIRST FOR HUNTERS®

INTERNATIONAL

WINS

1. **SCI Collaborates with SADC.** SCI has significantly increased our collaboration with the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in advance of the upcoming CITES Conference of the Parties. SCI staff attended the African Wildlife Consultative Forum, primarily to continue jointly strategizing with SADC.
2. **SCI Assists Ugandan Officials.** SCI, in collaboration with the South African Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment, hosted a high-level delegation from Uganda's Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife, and Antiquities in South Africa. The Ugandan delegation gained valuable insights into the role of sustainable hunting in conservation and rural development.
3. **SCI & FACE Represent in the EU Parliament.** SCI and FACE, together with other organizations, supported an event in the European Parliament titled "Wildlife Trade and Conservation: The EU's Objectives for CITES CoP20." The high-level debate gathered European decision-makers, delegations from several African countries, and experts in the European Parliament to discuss the EU's priorities for the upcoming CITES Conference of the Parties and global conservation challenges.
4. **SCI-Canada Launches CWCP.** SCI-Canada helped launch the Canada Wildlife Conservation Partners (CWCP), a coalition designed to unite conservation-focused organizations across the country in defending the rights and traditions of hunters, trappers, and outdoor enthusiasts. The CWCP unifies the voices of organizations committed to advancing science-based wildlife management, safeguarding biodiversity, defending the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation, and promoting public understanding of the value of sustainable use. Policy makers will not only hear the collective voice of hundreds of thousands of hunters and trappers across Canada but will also be held accountable to them.
5. **Newfoundland Government Requires Further Environmental Review for Wind Farm.** SCI, on behalf of itself and SCI-Canada, submitted a comment on a proposed wind farm and related facilities in Newfoundland, Canada. SCI expressed concern that the project threatens the habitat and conservation of vulnerable caribou and moose populations and other wildlife and requested further environmental review. In response, Newfoundland's Minister of Environment and Climate Change will require production of a full Environmental Impact Statement that carefully evaluates potential impacts on wildlife and local hunters.

LOSSES

1. **South Africa Loses Another Year of CITES Quota.** South Africa's Minister of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment, Dr. Dion George, announced that no CITES export quotas for African elephant, black rhinoceros, and leopard hunting trophies would be set for the 2024-2025 period, pending the outcome of a relevant court case.

THREATS

1. **Trophy Import Bans Loom.** Country-wide trophy import bans remain under consideration in various legislatures around the world, including the UK and France.
2. **South Africa May Introduce Animal "Well-Being" Into Wildlife Management.** South Africa's legal framework for wildlife management is under review, and new legislation may explicitly include consideration of animal "well-being" within conservation mandates.

Q1 FY2026 REPORT

SCI FIRST FOR HUNTERS®

LEGAL

WINS

1. **SCI Defends Florida Black Bear Hunt.** SCI moved to intervene in a Florida-based anti-hunting group's challenge to the state's recently approved black bear hunt. SCI has a strong interest in defending responsible management of black bears in Florida through regulated hunting and protecting our members' ability to participate in said hunt. We anticipate swift approval of this motion and look forward to defending science-based decision-making in Florida.
2. **Texas Court Protects Hunters' Personal Information.** SCI filed an amicus brief in a Texas state court arguing against disclosure of hunters' personal information during discovery in a contentious lawsuit over proceeds from a ranch. The court agreed with SCI and held that hunters' names and personal identifying information do not need to be disclosed, protecting these hunters from potential harassment or misuse of that information.
3. **SCI Sues for Suppressors in New Jersey.** SCI and partners sued the State of New Jersey over its ban on possession of firearms suppressors. The lawsuit, which is pending in federal court, challenges the constitutionality of New Jersey's ban on suppressors, which are considered "arms" under the Second Amendment. The government cannot categorically ban them without first proving a historical tradition of such bans—a burden it cannot meet.
4. **The SCI Center for Conservation Law and Education Welcomes Jake Hill as a Legal Intern.** SCI's new Center for Conservation Law and Education, which mobilizes its legal advocacy assets as well as state and federal education efforts, welcomes Jake Hill as the first legal intern. Hill is a third-year law student at Texas Tech University School of Law. His extensive background in conservation and biology includes work in southern Africa, and he is a certified Wildlife Biologist and Candidate Certified Forester. Hill's expertise will help the Center defend hunting rights and science-based wildlife management in courts around the country.
5. **SCI Engages on Black Bears in Alaska.** SCI has long advocated for expanded black bear hunting on federal lands in Alaska. That track record continued this quarter, in a meeting with the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA). SCI requested expanded implementation of the Executive Order on Alaska, to include rescission of a rule prohibiting the harvest of black bears over bait as well as revisions to procedures for closing hunting and trapping on Park Service lands that run afoul of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act. The proposed rule remains with OIRA and the Park Service, suggesting that these agencies are seriously considering SCI's points in a proposed rule.

LOSSES

1. **Despite Healthy Populations, Relisting Gray Wolves Could Happen.** A federal judge in Montana overruled the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's conclusion that gray wolves in the Western United States do not qualify as a threatened or endangered species under the Endangered Species Act. This decision paves the way for currently delisted wolves in Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming to be placed back under federal management. SCI and our co-intervenors, as well as the Service, have appealed this decision to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals.

THREATS

1. **Animal Rights Groups Are Waiting in the Wings.** Anti-hunting groups are champing at the bit to sue the Trump Administration for any pro-hunting rules. These groups proudly publicize the 200+ suits they filed against the first Trump Administration. They have challenged many decisions already, and lawsuits against pro-hunting or pro-Second Amendment actions are guaranteed. (But never fear—SCI is ready to join those lawsuits to defend hunting rights!)

Q1 FY2026 REPORT

SCI FIRST FOR HUNTERS®

GUIDES & OUTFITTERS

WINS

1. **SCI Welcomes New Guides & Outfitters Liaison.** Everett Headley started as SCI's new Guides & Outfitters Liaison in early July. Headley is a veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps and a member of the Outdoor Writers Association, with significant experience in the outdoor industry in product development, brand management, and grassroots representation. Headley will work directly with industry professionals to amplify their voices and ensure that SCI appropriately considers the interests of outfitters, professional hunters, and guides around the world.
2. **Reformed G&O Grant Program Generates Broad Interest.** SCI updated its Guides and Outfitters Grant Program, modernizing the application process and broadly appealing across the industry. This fiscal year, 16 applications were submitted with requests totaling over $300,000, signaling growing activity in the G&O associations and expanded interest in this SCI program.
3. **SCI Engages with Guides and Outfitters in Zambia.** At the invitation of Zambian outfitters, Headley spent two weeks in Zambia meeting with safari operators, the executive committee of the newly formed Zambia Chapter of SCI, ministry officials, and one orphanage for an SCI Foundation Bell Family Blue Bag donation. This robust tour resonated with those on the ground and further strengthened SCI partnerships that are vital for continued protection of hunting.

THREATS

1. **First Nations Closures Put Guided Hunting at Risk.** Manitoba First Nations have restricted areas of Crown land to hunting only by their members. Resident hunters have immediately been impacted, but outfitters are currently still bringing clients. However, further closures will likely result in the cancellation of guided hunts. There is further concern that this effort will spread to other provinces/territories if not addressed in a more definitive manner.

HUNTER INFORMATION SERVICE

WINS

1. **SCI Remains Vigilant on Argentina Trophy Seizure Crisis.** The Hunter Information Service kept 120 affected members informed of developments regarding a government investigation which resulted in the seizure of hunting trophies from many uninvolved hunters. SCI has learned that trophies for three outfitters have been released by the government and are being shipped to the hunters.
2. **Moving Ahead with Women Go Hunting.** The Women Go Hunting Initiative launched a monthly newsletter with two sponsors, one advertiser, and a 50% open rate. The associated Facebook group has reached over 520 members. And the Women Go Hunting Record Book Awards Challenge includes 65 participants and 79 entries.
3. **SCI Debunks False Reports.** One of the Hunter Information Service's greatest services is to correct rumors in the hunting industry. This quarter, the Service debunked false reports about airlines refusing to carry firearms, improper imposition of surcharges on credit cards in South Africa, and tariffs on trophy imports. For accurate information, visit the Hunter Information Service website at https://safariclub.org/hunter-information-service/.

443

MEMBER REQUESTS

- **70** Argentina trophy seizure crisis
- **66** Trophy issues (permitting, shipping/clearing, selling)
- **66** Hunting Travel (Firearms, Insurance, Airlines, Visas, Travel Warnings)
- **51** Outfitter disputes/complaints
- **39** Vetting and researching outfitters
- **39** Women Go Hunting program and events