

7 Oct. 2020

**To: PA Senate Judiciary Committee**  
**From: Animal Legal Defense Fund, Widener Law Commonwealth Student Chapter**  
**Re: SB 787**

Dear Judiciary Committee Chair Lisa Baker, Chair Larry Farnese, and Committee Members:

We are writing to urge you to end pigeon shoots in Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania is the only state known to host multiple pigeon shoots, most of them at private rod and gun clubs.<sup>1</sup> The best known pigeon shoot in America was the notorious Labor Day shoot held in Hegins, Pennsylvania every year from 1934 through 1998. For the last dozen years that it took place, humane groups held demonstrations, rescued wounded birds, and documented the cruelty.

Using this documentation, which included video of wounded birds left to suffer, registered Pennsylvania humane agent Clayton Hulsheiser filed charges against the operators of the Hegins shoot under Pennsylvania's general animal cruelty laws. The trial court dismissed them, ruling that the statutes did not apply to pigeons.

On appeal, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court issued a unanimous ruling that condemned the barbaric mass killing of pigeon shoots, including some 500 birds that “die immediately from their wounds,” hundreds who “suffer a slow and painful death . . . from their wounds or starvation,” and thousands more birds that are killed by a variety of methods, including having their heads torn from their bodies, being dashed against objects on the ground, suffocating after being tossed into a barrel filled with other dead and dying pigeons, and being crushed underfoot.<sup>2</sup> The justices sent the case back to the trial court, but seeing the handwriting on the wall, the sponsors settled the charges against them by agreeing to close down the shoot permanently.

Given the horrific description of slaughter documented by our state’s Supreme Court, it is unsurprising that an October 2013 poll found that 75 percent of Pennsylvanians favored passing legislation to ban live pigeon shoots.<sup>3</sup> Today, we join this

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<sup>1</sup> The Humane Society of the U.S., *Pennsylvania Pigeon Shoots* (accessed 4 Oct. 2020), <https://www.humanesociety.org/resources/pennsylvania-pigeon-shoots>.

<sup>2</sup> *Hulsizer v. Labor Day Comm., Inc.*, 557 Pa. 467, 471 (1999).

<sup>3</sup> *Pennsylvania Pigeon Shoots*.

overwhelming majority in asking you to take action to end live pigeon shoots in the Commonwealth and pass SB 787.

Sincerely,

Animal Legal Defense Fund, Widener Law Commonwealth Student Chapter

Richard Marcil, President

Olivia Inderrieden, Student Member

Leah Bobula, Vice President

Kayla Shellenhamer, Student Member

Yael Dadoun, Treasurer

Jennifer Brennan, Student Member

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