

James A. Schmidt II

P.O. Box 286, Dragoon, Arizona 85609 | 520-586-2582 | jschmidt@azammo.com

WHAT HAPPENED IN NEW MEXICO?

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Jim Schmidt

In 2015 animal activists helped introduce legislation to stop all coyote hunting events state wide. The Bill quickly passed in the Senate by a large margin and moved to the House of Representatives. Wildlife issues at that time first went to the House Committee that oversaw all agricultural activities for the state. With the help of New Mexico coyote hunter Mike LaFevre the Committee chair Representative **Candy Spence Ezzell** contacted me to appear as an expert witness on the issue for the committee. Representative Ezzell is a rancher that is very level headed and dedicated to protecting ranching in New Mexico.



*NM Representative
Candy Spence Ezzell 1*

At the public legislative hearing dozens of citizens testified on both sides of the issue being given 60 seconds to speak (it is longer than you think). As an expert witness I was allowed a longer time. In 2015 the Agricultural committee chose to table the Bill effectively killing it for the year. In New Mexico they have a 30 day session one year and then a 60 day session the next. During the 30 day legislative session only state budget issues can be addressed. This gave us a two year reprieve before the issue hit again.

As expected in 2017 the animal activists returned in force well prepared to reintroduce a new Bill to stop all coyote hunting events in the state as before. While waiting for their time again there were bill boards posted stating opposition to coyote hunting events. A group called Project Coyote produced a very well done and totally emotional film on the claimed cruelty of coyote hunting events. The film did not present any scientific facts supporting their claims in anyway but it was effective. This film was made available to legislators to view before the Bill was introduced. Additionally the film was aired on public television for an entire month in Las Cruces. The emotional film was shown to the public in Las Cruces, Albuquerque, and Santa Fe too.

News reports and articles supporting the banning of all coyote hunting events were presented all across New Mexico. It is clear in New Mexico that the news media does not support hunting or

trapping and publishes as much against them as possible. I wrote over a dozen letters to the editor and guest editors to different media outlets all across New Mexico. It was very hard to get editors to publish them. The deck was clearly stacked against coyote hunting events.



Sadly the New Mexico's Trappers Associations new President made it very clear that he felt that they should stay as far away from the coyote hunting event issue as possible and only focused on the effort to end all trapping on public land in New Mexico. He said in a letter to me on withdrawing interest in hosting a hunting contest "our basis for withdrawal- The recent public perception of these types of events". It was a strange move to me as there are far more coyote hunters than trappers but that was his opinion. Fortunately many New Mexico trappers testified to kill the Bill in the various legislative hearings much to the dismay of those attempting to advance the coyote contest Bill. In fact

few coyote hunter/sportsmen even bothered to appear and testify. My thanks to those trappers that did show. I do not live in New Mexico and I found time to show up and speak. It was 450 miles, \$135.00 (round trip) in gas each time, motel costs, food costs, and 6 ½ hours one way for me each time. There was an extreme copying expense for information to the 118 legislators too!

In 2017 the Bill was heard in the Senate first and passed all committees with little opposition. I worked with lobbyist Mr. Mario Jimenez (he was not paid for this effort) to meet with as many Senators that would see us on the issue. I went door to door handing out my large red book providing great detail on the bad Bill I had prepared, I shook hands, talked to the staff, and when possible I met with each Senator to explain our position. I appeared in every committee that addressed the issue too. I spent a week doing that at my own expense. Did it help? NO.

I then spent another week in Santa Fe going door to door again to the House of Representative members, their staff, and anyone that would stand in one place and listen. I again handed out my detailed red book on the issue to everyone. I gave the detailed book to the Governor, the Attorney General, the Lt. Governor, and the media. The New Mexico Livestock Association was there, New Mexico Game and Fish was there, and other livestock related groups were there and they all got a book. I even sent letters to every Sheriff in New Mexico alerting them to the proposed Bill that would require them, NOT Game and Fish, to enforce the new law. They got no additional funding for taking on this burden either. Go figure that one?



NM "Round House" Legislative Chamber where NM Laws are made



Large billboard against hunting contests in New Mexico

The Bill went through the Senate and the House passing in every single committee by large margins. The animal activists had successfully got the Speaker of the House to reassign all wildlife issues to the Conservation Committee instead of the Agriculture Committee where it belonged. Animal Activists knew the Bill would be killed in any agriculture committee. In fact during the showing of the new anti-coyote hunting film Project Coyote told the audience of their plans to do that very thing. Since basically no coyote hunters or trappers bothered to show-

up for the free showing (except me, Mike Lefevre, Scott Lefevre, and a couple of New Mexico coyote hunters) their plans went forward without opposition. Scott was removed from one meeting when he asked the presenters to provide the “science” that supported their position. They called him a ‘murderer’ and 5 of them escorted him out of the building. I remained quiet and watched.

Why did all this happen in the first place? In 2015 the New Mexico Desert Dogs predator hunting club held an event near Las Cruces and one of the members agreed to take the weekend take and process the fur. That person changed his mind and decided to dump the take animals in an open area on New Mexico State land. Within a few days of the dumping a photograph was taken of the dumped take animals and it was broadcast all across New Mexico resulting a citizens outcry and alarm.



39 discarded coyotes by the NM Desert Dogs Club near Las Cruces, NM. This picture is being distributed by the Southwest Environmental Center in Las Cruces.



That photograph is now on a post card about New Mexico, in reports, and appearing on billboards clear into Canada! One

photograph caused all this. A single picture is

certainly worth 1,000 words! Interestingly New Mexico has a state law that one has to obtain a “permit” from the State Land Office before conducting any commercial activities (including taking pictures or film) that would be for profit. Conservations groups like the Southwest Environmental Center in Las Cruces is using the picture (without a permit) for fund raising purposes today! Despite written complains to the New Mexico State Land Commissioner, no action has been taken on this illegal use of the picture. But the Land Commissioner did post a \$1,000 reward for information on who did the illegal dumping of the take animals. I guess we know what side he is on! Please note that he is up for re-election this coming year.



The animal activists will be back in 2019. I cannot disclose exactly how we defeated the Bill this year but we did. Only myself and lobbyist Mario know the details. I was the only one remaining at the legislature when the Bill went to the Speaker for assignment. I sat in the stands alone for 12 hours at a time waiting to see what would happen; if we could actually stop

it. It took two specific dedicated House of Representatives members to put an end to the effort this year. We got lucky and we cannot rely on luck again.

Why is this important to members of the Arizona Predator Callers? Whichever state falls first will be used as the format for all the other attacks across America. The animal activists tried to end the taking



AZ Senator Gail Griffin

of bobcats and cougars in Arizona this past year. They already have no trapping on public land in Arizona. They have defeated the Heritage Bill guaranteeing citizens the right to hunt, trap, and fish in Arizona twice. Thanks to Arizona State Senator Gail Griffin, who killed the Bill in her committee quickly, we stalled them off. I worked with her briefly to move quickly on that effort and she was all over it. Senator Griffin and I know they will be back though. She says she is ready for them!



They have Chapters in every state!

I encourage the Arizona Predator Callers to form a “legislative committee” if you do not already have one. I encourage APC to join with the Arizona State Rifle and Pistol Association and others in the firearms and hunting protection lobbying efforts of Landis Aden landisaden@cox.net. I personally know Landis and he has been doing the lobbying for the State Association and others for over 20 years and is very good, honest, and well informed. I encourage APC to give Landis a retainer fee each year to watch out for APC’s best interest in the State Legislature. The money will be well spent. These groups are not going away! Join the fight today please!



My contact information is;

Email; jschmidt@azammo.com
Personal Cellular- on special request
Office-520-586-2582
FAX- 520-586-2582
P.O. Box 286 (US Mail)
4751 East Jackalope Road (UPS or FEDEX only)
Dragoon, Arizona 85609

Sincerely,

James A. Schmidt II (Jim)