

Oklahoma Law Enforcement Professionals Call For Legislature To Deliver Fairness In Sentencing

ATOKA, OKLAHOMA, UNITED STATES, April 3, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Oklahoma Gamefowl Commission released the following letter issued today to members of the State Legislature and signed by 38 Oklahomans currently or formerly in law enforcement encouraging fairness in sentencing and modernization in State statute impacting local farmers breeding gamefowl. The letter can be read here:



To Members of the Oklahoma Legislature,

We are proud to be Oklahomans who serve or have served our state and communities as law enforcement professionals. We are writing to express our support for modernizing the State statutes around gamefowl to establish fairness in sentencing and address unwarranted uncertainty impacting local farmers.

Currently, Oklahoma is home to 5,000 farms that are safely and responsibly breeding these roosters, contributing over \$60 million to the State's economy. These are the farmers we support and are advocating for in this letter.

In 2002, Oklahomans outlawed cockfighting as a sport through a state question that appeared on the same ballot that elected Brad Henry as Governor. The language on the state question was written by the U.S. Humane Society, and the vote placed this policy into State statute - not the Constitution - where the Legislature was given the authority to address it accordingly.

Cockfighting as a sport will remain illegal based on both policy proposals currently in the State House and State Senate to reform this 25-year-old statute. Good.

Efforts to reform this 25-year-old statute will bring Oklahoma's criminal code in line with common practices in other states. Good.

It is imperative these reform efforts move forward and a final agreement reaches the Governor's desk for signature. Oklahoma's penalties around this issue are unarguably the harshest in the nation. It threatens rural farmers and diminishes an honest extension of correction and redirection.

When an Oklahoman is convicted of being in possession of a male game chicken, he or she can be sentenced to up to 10 years in prison for the first offense. This threat looms over the 5,000 farmers in Oklahoma who breed roosters. Meanwhile, in states from Kansas and Missouri to North Carolina and Georgia, possession is legal.

For those caught in the act of cockfighting, Oklahoma is the only state to put a person in prison for up to 10 years upon first offense. This is more severe than second-degree manslaughter or rape, egregious offenses harming other humans.

The existence of these 5,000 farms are not a threat to our communities, and our law enforcement officers' limited resources should remain focused on preventing and deterring crimes that truly threaten the safety and wellbeing of people in our communities. We urge the State Legislature to deliver reform and fairness in our laws this year.

Sincerely,

Tony Head - Atoka County Sheriff
Tony Simmons - Bryan County Commissioner
Landy Offolter - McClain County Sheriff
Bill Roady - Retired Sheriff of Garvin County
Gary Boggess - Grady County Sheriff
Roy Deck - Retired Sheriff of Coal County
Rodney Derryberry - Leflore County Sheriff
Jeff Coleman - Retired Sheriff of Adair County
Bryan Jump - Coal County Sheriff
Rickey Hunt - Retired Sheriff of Atoka County
Darin Rogers - Murray County Sheriff
John Smithhart - Retired Chief of Police Atoka
Jake Tucker - Leflore County Deputy Sheriff
Brad Horn
Scott Martin
Zach Pineira
Rodeney Wright
Jamie Miller
Mark McClume
Kevin Miller
John Wyatt
Greg Fullingim

Austin Smith Lindsey
Rusty Russell
Darren Goode
Burk Cash
Terry Holston
Fernando Cardenas
Darwin Beck
Roger Headrick
Monty Montgomery
Eric Haworth
Odis Odel Headrick
Phillip Magby
Rick Pearman
Brent Henry
Jason Harris
Bobby Smithhart

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