

The Committee to Restore the Dove Shooting Ban

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Pro-dove Shooting Groups Using Illegal Lottery to Finance Campaign

Committee to Restore the Dove Shooting Ban asks Attorney General to Investigate Illegal Sweepstakes being used to Finance Pro-Dove Shooting Ballot Proposal Campaign

The Committee to Restore the Dove Shooting Ban announced today it has requested that Michigan Attorney General Mike Cox investigate an illegal lottery organized by pro-dove shooting groups to raise money for a ballot proposal campaign to permanently abolish Michigan's 100 year-old ban on shooting mourning doves.

The "Citizens for Wildlife Conservation," the pro-shooting group formed to encourage Michigan voters to create a dove shooting season by voting "yes" on this November's ballot proposal, is operating a "sweepstakes" in which tickets are sold for a chance to win numerous prizes, including 40 acres of land or \$20,000 in cash. According to the CWC's website, the goal of the sweepstakes is to raise \$3.2 million to purchase advertising designed to educate Michigan voters as to the "serious threat posed by the anti dove hunting issues."

By Michigan law, all lotteries such as the one the CWC is running are prohibited unless they are sanctioned by the state. Michigan law expressly forbids the operation of lotteries to support or defeat a ballot proposal. If the Attorney General's office finds that the CWC has broken the law, those individuals responsible for an illegal lottery face up to a \$1000 fine and 2 years in prison. Businesses assisting the sale of raffle tickets, such as Cabela's Sporting Goods and Bass Pro-shop, may also be guilty of a crime. If the lottery is determined to be illegal, prizes may never be awarded to any individual who has purchased a ticket.

"This lottery is clearly illegal," said Mike Hodge, an attorney for the Committee to Restore the Dove Shooting Ban and expert on Michigan election law. "The law expressly prohibits sweepstakes of this sort from being used to finance ballot proposal campaigns, and that's just what the CWC is doing. We hope that Attorney General Cox will thoroughly investigate what seem to be obvious criminal activities. Not only are those CWC members who organized the lottery guilty of a crime, but any business or individual that helped to sell these tickets is also culpable."

“It’s unfortunate that the pro-dove shooting campaign will stop at nothing to win, even if that means breaking the law,” said Julie Baker, Director of the Committee to Restore the Dove Shooting Ban. “I think it’s shameful that these groups would show such total disregard for Michigan law. I also feel bad for individuals who purchased tickets that were unknowingly supporting an illegal operation, especially since there will be no prizes awarded if this sweepstakes is shut down.”

“We respect Michigan’s hunting heritage, but allowing the shooting of Michigan’s mourning doves for the first time in a century does not reflect Michigan’s values,” said Baker. “Shooting the mourning dove, Michigan’s official bird of peace, is like shooting a robin, our official state bird. Shooting mourning doves doesn’t make sense, especially since they pose no danger to people or property, are not a viable food source, and are not overpopulated. There’s just no good reason to shoot doves.”

The Committee to Restore the Dove Shooting Ban is a grassroots coalition of humane and conservation groups representing Michigan-based organizations that boasts thousands of Michigan residents, such as the Michigan Audubon Society, Michigan Humane Society, The Humane Society of the United States (which alone has 300,000 Michigan members), Michigan State Grange, and dozens of other sportsmen, farmers’, religious and business groups. The Committee to Restore the Dove Shooting Ban seeks to restore Michigan’s 100-year ban on the shooting of mourning doves by urging Michigan voters to **vote ‘no’** on the mourning dove referendum in the November 7, 2006 election. The group collected more than 275,000 petition signatures to place a referendum to stop the shooting of mourning doves on the November ballot.

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