

The Committee to Restore the Dove Shooting Ban

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Dove Protection Proponents Seek Other Avenues to Enforce Cox Ruling on Illegal Lottery

Committee to Restore the Dove Shooting Ban Says While Attorney General's Ruling Correct, Greater Enforcement Needed—Group May Seek Action from Secretary of State or File Criminal Charges at County Level

LANSING – Officials of the Committee to Restore the Dove Shooting Ban today said that while they were pleased Michigan Attorney General Mike Cox has shut down an illegal lottery organized by pro-dove shooting groups, the Committee will seek other means for ensuring that none of the money raised illegally can be used on the ballot proposal campaign. The Committee to Restore the Dove Shooting Ban, which is urging a “no” vote on Proposal 3 in order to continue Michigan’s 100 year tradition of protecting mourning doves, asked the Attorney General’s office to investigate the illegal lottery on June 2 of this year.

In a notice filed with the Ingham Circuit Court on Friday, the Attorney General and the group holding the illegal lottery, “Citizens for Wildlife Conservation” (CWC), agreed that the group’s “Save Our Heritage Sweepstakes” was unlawful and would be immediately canceled, and that all persons who purchased the \$5.00 lottery tickets would be notified that they are entitled to a refund. However, if purchasers of tickets do not take action to request a refund, and if that request is not received by Citizens for Wildlife Conservation within 30 days, CWC will be allowed to keep the illegally raised funds to use in their campaign to create a new dove shooting season. The Committee to Restore the Dove Shooting Ban says that all illegal money should be returned.

“While Attorney General Cox is right to finally hear our complaint and shut down this illegal lottery, he is wrong to allow dove shooting proponents to keep illegally begotten funds, and to use that money on their campaign to promote the target shooting of Michigan’s official bird of peace,” said Julie Baker, Director of the Committee to Restore the Dove Shooting Ban. “This is like saying to someone who got caught stealing money ‘Hey, stop stealing—but go ahead and keep the money you’ve already illegally taken.’”

Baker said that because Attorney General Cox has made clear that this was in fact an illegal lottery, and because Cox is allowing illegal money to be kept and used by the CWC, the Committee to Restore the Dove Shooting Ban is weighing options to seek greater enforcement on the matter, either through a complaint with the Secretary of State’s Elections Bureau, seeking criminal charges brought by county prosecutors, or both.

Baker added that the Committee filed a complaint over two months ago and the CWC has continued the illegal raffle throughout that period. She noted that the AG’s office often shuts down illegal gambling operations such

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as this within 48 hours. “It’s preposterous that the CWC would be able to keep any money earned illegally, especially money they’ve been raising illegally since we filed our complaint with Attorney General Cox over two months ago.”

The “sweepstakes” tickets had been sold on the Internet and at retail locations such as Cabela’s and Bass Pro Shops for a chance to win numerous prizes, including 40 acres of land or \$20,000 in cash. According to CWC’s website, the goal of the sweepstakes was to raise \$3.2 million to purchase advertising designed to educate Michigan voters as to the “serious threat posed by the anti-dove hunting issue.”

Also, the CWC is supported by several other organizations—including the Virginia-based National Rifle Association, Ohio-based U.S. Sportsmen’s Alliance, Arizona-based Safari Club International, and Michigan United Conservation Clubs—which may be holding their own lotteries with the money intended for the ballot campaign. For example, a Safari Club International fundraiser scheduled for this Wednesday in Livonia advertises that guns and other items will be raffled at the event. By Michigan law, all lotteries are prohibited unless they are sanctioned by the state. In addition, Michigan law expressly forbids the operation of lotteries to support or defeat a ballot proposal.

The Committee to Restore the Dove Shooting Ban also expressed concern that dove shooting proponents would form another ballot committee in an attempt to circumvent the Attorney General’s ruling and start another illegal sweepstakes through the new committee. Dove shooting proponents created a new campaign committee August 2.

“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’s, farmers’, religious, and business groups. The Committee to Restore the Dove Shooting Ban seeks to continue Michigan’s 100-year protection for mourning doves by urging Michigan voters to **vote ‘no’** on Proposal 3 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. The website for the Committee to Restore the Dove Shooting Ban is www.StopShootingDoves.org.

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