



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Pete Harckham

Harckham, Woerner Bill Expanding the Use of Crossbows in Big Game Hunting Signed Into Law

[Pete Harckham](#)

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State Sen. Pete Harckham

Albany, NY – New York State Senator Pete Harckham and Assemblymember Carrie Woerner announced today that their legislation legalizing the use of crossbows for big game hunting has been signed into law by Governor Kathy Hochul. The new law allows crossbows to be used anywhere longbows are permitted, reforms equipment regulations, and establishes safety buffer zones to protect public safety.

“This is great news for bow hunters and conservationists alike,” said Harckham. “The new law expands access to hunting while helping control New York’s overgrown deer population, which has reached unsustainable levels in many areas. I’m grateful to Governor Hochul for signing this bill, to Assemblymember Woerner for her partnership, and to the many advocates whose support helped get it across the finish line.”

“I’m thrilled that this bill has been signed by the Governor. We have had so many constituents call about it over the years,” said Woerner. “By extending the hunting season in which crossbows can be used, game will be better managed, and older individuals and individuals with disabilities will be better able to participate in the sport they love. Given its faster learning curve, this bill also promotes hunter recruitment and mentored hunting programs. I’m grateful for Senator Harckham’s steadfast support on this legislation, and thankful that Governor Hochul has signed it

into law.”

The bill received broad support from both the hunting and environmental communities. For hunters, it expands access, particularly for those who may be physically unable to use a traditional longbow. For conservationists, the law represents an important tool in managing the state’s growing deer population, which has increased in recent years due to mild winters and abundant food sources.

“The Nature Conservancy commends Governor Hochul, Senator Harckham, and Assemblymember Woerner for their leadership in updating hunting policies to improve deer management and forest health,” said Bill Cooke, policy advisor to the Nature Conservancy. “Half of New York’s 19 million acres of forest are struggling to grow the next generation of trees due to the state’s overabundant deer herd. This law is an important step forward in protecting New York’s forests and the many benefits they provide.”

Unchecked deer populations have led to a surge in car accidents, crop and property damage, and significant habitat degradation. Environmental advocates have praised the legislation for addressing this pressing ecological issue.

Prior to the bill’s passage, crossbow use in big game hunting was heavily restricted and limited to the final days of archery season. By updating the legal definition of “long bow” to include crossbows, the law now permits their use throughout the entire archery season, in any area where longbows are allowed.

The legislation also modernizes equipment standards by removing overly rigid and outdated specifications, such as bolt length, limb width, and bow length, and replacing them with a clear, functional standard: a minimum draw weight of 100 pounds and a maximum draw weight of 200 pounds.

To protect public safety, the law prohibits the discharge of crossbows within 500 feet of homes, farm structures, schools, playgrounds, churches, factories, or other occupied buildings in Westchester, Nassau, and Suffolk Counties. Other counties may adopt these restrictions by passing local laws.

The law took effect immediately upon the Governor’s signature on August 26, 2025, and will be in place for the upcoming hunting season which begins in the Northern Zone (Adirondack Park and surrounding North Country) on September 27th and on October 1st in the Southern Zone (most of Central New York, Mohawk Valley,

Southern Tier, Finger Lakes and Western New York) as well as Westchester and Suffolk County—marking the first time crossbows may be used throughout the full big game season in New York State.

“Crossbows are one of the most accessible tools we have to bring new folks into the field. They're intuitive, safe, and effective,” said Brandon Dale, PhD Region 2 Representative, NYS Conservation Fund Advisory Board. “They allow us to offer mentorship hunts in areas where firearms aren't permitted and traditional archery presents too steep a learning curve for first-time participants. If we want hunting to continue as both a conservation tool and a cultural practice, we must remove barriers-not reinforce them. That's why I support this bill.”

related legislation

[2025-S6360A](#)

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- Introduced
 - In Committee Assembly
 - In Committee Senate
 - - On Floor Calendar Assembly
 - On Floor Calendar Senate
 - - Passed Assembly
 - Passed Senate
 - Delivered to Governor
 - Signed By Governor
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[Clarifies provisions regarding the use of crossbows for hunting](#)

March 11, 2025

Signed by Governor

Sponsored by [Pete Harckham](#)

Do you support this bill?

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Aye

Nay