

- SUBJECT:** Prohibiting Internet hunting
- COMMITTEE:** Culture, Recreation, and Tourism — committee substitute recommended
- VOTE:** 4 ayes — Hilderbran, Kuempel, Gallego, Phillips  
0 nays  
3 absent — Baxter, Dukes, Dunnam
- WITNESSES:** For — Kirby Brown, Texas Wildlife Association; Charly Seale, Exotic Wildlife Association; Robert L. Trimble, Texas Humane Legislation Network; Alice Tripp, Texas State Rifle Association; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Marida Favio del Core Borromeo and Carolyn Seale, Exotic Wildlife Association; John Hubbard, Texas Federation for Humane Societies; Warren Mayberry, Texas Farm Bureau; Susan Hendrix; Patricia Nordyke; James Terrell  
  
Against — John Lockwood, live-shot.com; Allen Hansen
- BACKGROUND:** Computer-assisted remote hunters use computer technology, including the Internet, to shoot animals or birds using a firearm or archery equipment via remote control in real time.  
  
On April 7, 2005, Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission by rule made it an offense to hunt wildlife by remote control if the hunter is not physically present and personally operating the means of take during the time the hunting occurs. This rule applies to all native game animals, game birds, and aquatic animal life.
- DIGEST:** CSHB 391 would prohibit a person from engaging in computer-assisted remote hunting using a firearm if the animal being hunted was located in Texas. It also would prohibit a person from providing or operating facilities for computer-assisted remote hunting, including property, hunting blinds, and rooms to facilitate the practice.  
  
A violation of these provisions would be a class A Park and Wildlife Code misdemeanor (up to one year in jail and/or a fine of \$500- \$4,000) for each animal killed or injured.

Providing materials that could be used in the process of computer-assisted hunting, such as a computer or camera, would not constitute an offense.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2005.

**SUPPORTERS  
SAY:**

Computer-assisted remote hunting, or Internet hunting, is unethical and deplorable. It is not “hunting” in any meaningful sense of the word because animals have no chance to sense and flee the hunter who is miles away in front of a computer screen. In reality, online hunting is cruel, pay-per-view slaughter. No self-respecting hunter would condone such a practice, and neither should the state.

Hunters in Texas must have a hunting license. When someone hunts in Texas via the Internet, there is no way to verify that the person sitting in front of the computer screen has a valid Texas hunting license. This practice should be banned altogether, if only for the sake of enforcing hunting license requirements.

There is no assurance that a company would have a person onsite because the state does not regulate these companies. Also, Internet hunting would not be the only opportunity for people with disabilities to participate in hunting. Many groups in Texas assist people with disabilities so that they can participate.

**OPPONENTS  
SAY:**

Computer-assisted remote hunting is a new development that allows many people to enjoy the sport of hunting who otherwise could not. For example, Internet hunting gives people with severe disabilities the chance to participate in this activity. Also, because there is always a human managing the rifle on site for safety reasons, animals have the chance to sense the hunter’s assistant. Internet hunting should not be banned because it could be a growth industry in Texas and a possible source of revenue to the state.

**NOTES:**

The substitute changes the penalty from a class C Parks and Wildlife Code misdemeanor to a class A Parks and Wildlife Code misdemeanor.

Some provisions in this bill also are included in HB 2026 by Hilderbran, which was placed on the Major State Calendar for May 11. That bill would make a first offense of computer-assisted hunting a class B Parks and Wildlife Code misdemeanor (180 days in jail and/or a fine of \$200-\$2,000).