

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1114

As Reported by House Committee On:
Agriculture & Natural Resources

Title: An act relating to hunters under the age of fourteen.

Brief Description: Regarding youth hunting privileges.

Sponsors: Representatives Blake, Orcutt, Green, Springer, Van De Wege, Rolfes, McCune, Simpson, Goodman, Herrera, Warnick and Conway.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Agriculture & Natural Resources: 1/22/09, 1/30/09 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires all hunters under the age of 14 to be accompanied by an adult licensed hunter.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Blake, Chair; Jacks, Vice Chair; Chandler, Ranking Minority Member; Smith, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Liias, McCoy, Nelson, Ormsby, Pearson, Van De Wege and Warnick.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 1 member: Representative Kretz.

Staff: Jason Callahan (786-7117)

Background:

All individuals interested in hunting must be licensed to do so by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). Prior to receiving a hunting license from the WDFW, the applicant must complete a course that teaches the safe handling of firearms, firearm safety, conservation, and sportsmanship.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Prior to 1994, all hunters under the age of 14 were required to be accompanied by a parent, guardian, safety instructor, or other approved adult when they were in possession of a firearm for the purposes of hunting or target practice. Today, there is no minimum age requirement for a hunting license or for enrollment in a hunter's education course.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

All hunters under the age of 14 must be accompanied by a licensed hunter over the age of 18 when hunting for wild birds and animals. The accompanying adult hunter must stay within a range that permits continual unaided visual and auditory communication.

It is a civil natural resources infraction for a person under the age of 14 to hunt without an adult companion.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The substitute bill establishes that the act of unaccompanied hunting by a minor is a civil infraction, not a criminal penalty, and removes the definition of "accompanied" from a section applicable to all of Title 77 and retains the language from the definition in a section only applicable to accompaniment requirements for youth hunters.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) There are mixed reactions in the hunting community, but there is a consensus that age 14 is an appropriate age to allow solo hunting. Many in the hunting community already operate under the assumption that you must be at least 14 to hunt alone. This is a prudent and responsible measure. Youth hunters who are supervised by an adult are safer hunters. Hunting is generally a safe activity, but the rare unfortunate incident can cast a negative light.

(With concerns) Age 16 is a more appropriate age to allow unaccompanied hunting. Proper judgment does not typically develop in a youth until after the age of 14.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Blake, prime sponsor; Mike Cenci, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife; and Ed Owens, Hunters Heritage Council.

(With concerns) Jonathan Guzzo, Washington Trails Association.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.