

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5227

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation, February 23, 2005
Ways & Means, March 7, 2005

Title: An act relating to wildlife harvest reports.

Brief Description: Decriminalizing certain hunter reporting requirements.

Sponsors: Senators Jacobsen, Doumit, Fraser and Rasmussen; by request of Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation: 1/27/05, 2/23/05 [DPS-WM].
Ways & Means: 3/4/05, 3/7/05 [DPS(NROR)].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, OCEAN & RECREATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5227 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Jacobsen, Chair; Oke, Ranking Minority Member; Fraser, Hargrove, Morton, Spanel, Stevens and Swecker.

Staff: Curt Gavigan (786-7437)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5227 as recommended by Committee on Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Prentice, Chair; Doumit, Vice Chair; Fraser, Vice Chair; Zarelli, Ranking Minority Member; Brandland, Fairley, Kohl-Welles, Parlette, Pflug, Pridemore, Rasmussen, Regala, Roach, Rockefeller, Schoesler and Thibaudeau.

Staff: Kirstan Arestad (786-7708)

Background: The Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) mandates by rule that all hunters report their hunting activity for deer, elk, bear, or turkey by January 31 of each year. Currently, under RCW 77.15, a violation of the Department's reporting requirements is a misdemeanor.

According to Department figures, 70 percent of hunters reported wildlife harvests in 2001, 66 percent reported in 2002, and 65 percent reported in 2003. The Department asserts that a reporting rate below 90 percent reduces the accuracy of its harvest estimates, making it difficult to determine harvest impacts and increasing the cost of harvest estimation.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The Department may adopt a rule requiring the reporting of harvesting effort for wildlife. The Department may also set an administrative fee of up to ten dollars for failure to report harvesting effort, which must be paid before a current license may be obtained.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The substitute bill allows the Department to set an administrative penalty of up to ten dollars, as opposed to fifty dollars in the original bill. The Department is required to provide options for a licensee to submit harvest report information to an operator prior to the reporting deadline. The Department must report to the Legislature annually regarding harvest reporting compliance rates, administrative penalty rates, and the amount of administrative penalties collected.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: Imposing an administrative fee will increase the number of hunters who comply with reporting requirements, thereby increasing the data available to the Department in managing wildlife populations. Moving to an administrative fee will also take away the threat of a misdemeanor for those who fail to report.

Testimony Against: None.

Who Testified: PRO: Martin Keilwitz, Western Washington Wildlife Council; Ed Owens, Hunters Heritage Council; Fred Zitterkopf, Inland NW Wildlife Council; Steve Pozzanghera, Department of Fish and Wildlife; Angela Stringer, Game Management Advisory Council; Dave Ware, Department of Fish and Wildlife.