

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6358

As of January 27, 2006

Title: An act relating to hunter education certificate requirements.

Brief Description: Concerning hunter education requirements.

Sponsors: Senators Morton and Rasmussen.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation: 1/26/06.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, OCEAN & RECREATION

Staff: Curt Gavigan (786-7437)

Background: A recreational license issued by the Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) is required to hunt for classified wildlife in Washington. When purchasing a hunting license, persons under the age of 18 must present certification of the completion of a course of instruction of at least 10 hours in the safe handling of firearms, safety, conservation, and sportsmanship. This requirement also applies to persons purchasing a hunting license for the first time if born after January 1, 1972.

The hunter education program is managed by DFW. Courses focus on the topics of firearms and outdoor safety, wildlife management, and hunter responsibility. The average course includes between four to six sessions and spans a total of 16 hours or more. All hunter education instructors are certified by DFW.

Summary of Bill: The hunter education requirements do not apply to active duty military personnel of the United States armed forces who provide documentation establishing successful completion of firearms qualification requirements for his or her branch of the armed forces.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Testimony For: None.

Testimony Against: Military weapons qualifications do not demonstrate familiarity with the entirety of the content of Washington hunter education courses. Although weapons qualifications demonstrate familiarity with firearms and marksmanship skills, there is no training provided on wildlife management, the need to wear hunter orange, or hunter ethics.

Additionally, hunter license vendors would have difficulty identifying the proper documentation for military weapons qualifications.

Testimony Other: The idea of streamlining hunter education for military personnel already skilled in handling firearms makes sense, but there is still a need to make sure military personnel are familiar with hunter ethics in Washington State. DFW could do this by expanding outreach programs to the military.

Who Testified: PRO: None.

CON: Larry DePaul, Washington Hunter Education Instructors Association; Bruce Bjork, DFW; Richard Mann, DFW.

OTHER: Ed Owens, Hunters Heritage Council; Joe Waldron, CCRKBA, WAC, WCW, GOAL, WSRPA.