

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESHB 1199

As of April 1, 2013

Title: An act relating to ensuring hunter safety.

Brief Description: Ensuring hunter safety.

Sponsors: House Committee on Agriculture & Natural Resources (originally sponsored by Representatives Blake, Chandler, Takko, Buys, Kirby, Orcutt, Lytton, Van De Wege, Nealey, Hudgins, Stanford, Wilcox, Warnick, Ryu, Morrell and Tharinger; by request of Department of Fish and Wildlife).

Brief History: Passed House: 3/06/13, 97-0.

Committee Activity: Natural Resources & Parks: 3/28/13.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES & PARKS

Staff: Curt Gavigan (786-7437)

Background: Hunting License Requirement Generally. When purchasing a hunting license, persons born after January 1, 1972, must present certification that they completed a program of hunter education. The Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) may also accept certificates from other states. The Washington hunter education program consists of at least ten hours of instruction in safety, conservation, sportsmanship, and firearm handling. Average classes involve four to six sessions and require the student to pass a written test and, other than students who are in the military, demonstrate firearms handling skills. DFW also offers a home study option.

Hunter education courses are taught by volunteers, either individually or as a team, that are trained and certified by DFW. All instructors must be at least 21 years of age, and must undergo a background investigation by DFW.

An exemption from the hunter education requirement is available in the form of a one-year deferral once in a lifetime to hunt without completing the training course, as long as the hunter is doing so in the company of a hunter over the age of 18 who has been licensed for the prior three years.

Minimum Hunting Ages. Prior to 1994, all hunters under the age of 14 must have been accompanied by a parent, guardian, safety instructor, or other approved adult when they were

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.

in possession of a firearm for the purposes of hunting or target practice. Currently, there is no minimum age requirement for a hunting license or for enrollment in a hunter education course.

Summary of Bill: The Hunter Education Program Statute is Modified. Beginning August 1, 2013, DFW may charge a registration fee of up to \$20 for a hunter education training course and up to \$10 for a duplicate hunter education certificate. The fee must be collected consistent with federal regulations for revenue associated with a federal grant, due to the fact that hunter education program funding is largely federal. Additionally, the Fish & Wildlife Commission must adopt rules regarding the use of this revenue.

Several other changes are made including the following:

- changing the term sportsmanship to ethical hunting behavior as it relates to hunter education course content;
- specifying that a military service person must be a resident of, or stationed in, Washington to be exempt from the firearm skills portion of hunter education; and
- removing the requirement that the licensed hunter accompanying a hunter education deferred hunter have held a license for the prior three years.

Minimum Hunting Ages are Provided. All hunters under the age of 14 must be accompanied by a licensed hunter age 18 years or older unless the youth is hunting on private property owned or leased by an immediate family member. A violation of this requirement is a natural resources infraction.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: This bill appropriately reinstates an age requirement for youth to hunt unaccompanied, maintaining that youth under the age of 14 while hunting must be accompanied by a licensed individual at least 18 years of age. It also placed in statute DFW authority to charge a fee of up to \$20 for hunter safety course registration, adding needed revenue to the DFW hunter education program.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Bruce Bjork, Greg Schirato, DFW.