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**SENATE BILL 6515**

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**State of Washington 64th Legislature 2016 Regular Session**

**By** Senators O'Ban, Dammeier, and Warnick

AN ACT Relating to an elective firearms safety and hunter education course for high school students; amending RCW 77.32.155; and adding a new section to chapter 28A.230 RCW.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  A new section is added to chapter 28A.230 RCW to read as follows:

(1)(a) The superintendent of public instruction, in consultation with the department of fish and wildlife, must develop a program of instruction for firearms safety and hunter education for students in grades nine through twelve that satisfies the hunting license prerequisite requirements of RCW 77.32.155. The program of instruction must be developed according to a schedule that provides school districts with sufficient time to adopt the program for the 2017-18 school year. In developing the program of instruction, the superintendent of public instruction should seek partnerships with public and private entities for the purpose of minimizing costs associated with its development and implementation.

(b) The program of instruction must include a firearms safety and hunter education component, and a civics component that examines the Constitution of the United States with an emphasis on the Bill of Rights. The academic rigor of the civics component must exceed that of the compulsory study requirements established in RCW 28A.230.170 for the Constitution of the United States.

(2)(a) Beginning with the 2017-18 school year, any school district may adopt the program developed under this section as an elective one-half credit course to instruct students in grades nine through twelve, or grades ten through twelve if grade nine is not offered at the high school, in the content area addressed by the curriculum. To the extent practicable, the firearms safety and hunter education component of the program must be taught:

(i) By hunter education instructors authorized by the department of fish and wildlife under RCW 77.32.155; and

(ii) At a local firearms range selected by the applicable school district that has elected to make its facilities, property, or both available to students either free of charge or at a reduced rate.

(b) A school district may provide additional instruction that supplements the program developed under this section.

(c) School districts adopting the program developed under this section are encouraged to seek partnerships with public and private entities for the purpose of minimizing costs to students participating in a firearms safety and hunter education course.

**Sec.**  RCW 77.32.155 and 2013 c 23 s 243 are each amended to read as follows:

(1)(a) When purchasing any hunting license, persons under the age of eighteen shall present certification of completion of a course of instruction of at least ten hours in the safe handling of firearms, safety, conservation, and sporting/hunting behavior. All persons purchasing any hunting license for the first time, if born after January 1, 1972, shall present such certification.

(b)(i) The director may establish a program for training persons in the safe handling of firearms, conservation, and sporting/hunting behavior and shall prescribe the type of instruction and the qualifications of the instructors. The director shall, as part of establishing the training program, exempt members of the United States military from the firearms skills portion of any instruction course completed over the internet.

(ii) The director may cooperate with the national rifle association, organized sports/outdoor enthusiasts' groups, or other public or private organizations when establishing the training program.

(iii) The director may cooperate and partner with the superintendent of public instruction and school districts in their implementation of section 1 of this act and the provision of hunter education training opportunities offered as part of the public school curriculum.

(c) Upon the successful completion of a course established under this section, the trainee shall receive a hunter education certificate signed by an authorized instructor. The certificate is evidence of compliance with this section.

(d) The director may accept certificates from other states that persons have successfully completed firearm safety, hunter education, or similar courses as evidence of compliance with this section.

(2)(a) The director may authorize a once in a lifetime, one license year deferral of hunter education training for individuals who are accompanied by a nondeferred Washington-licensed hunter who has held a Washington hunting license for the prior three years and is over eighteen years of age. The commission shall adopt rules for the administration of this subsection to avoid potential fraud and abuse.

(b) The director is authorized to collect an application fee, not to exceed twenty dollars, for obtaining the once in a lifetime, one license year deferral of hunter education training from the department. This fee must be deposited into the fish and wildlife enforcement reward account and must be used exclusively to administer the deferral program created in this subsection.

(c) For the purposes of this subsection, "accompanied" means to go along with another person while staying within a range of the other person that permits continual unaided visual and auditory communication.

(3) To encourage the participation of an adequate number of instructors for the training program, the commission shall develop nonmonetary incentives available to individuals who commit to serving as an instructor. The incentives may include additional hunting opportunities for instructors.

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