

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 1261

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**As Reported by House Committee On:**

Rural Development, Agriculture & Natural Resources

**Title:** An act relating to wildlife harvest reports required by the department of fish and wildlife.

**Brief Description:** Concerning wildlife harvest reports required by the department of fish and wildlife.

**Sponsors:** Representative Klippert.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Rural Development, Agriculture & Natural Resources: 1/27/21, 2/5/21 [DP].

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Increases the maximum administrative penalty for a hunter who fails to report a wildlife harvest report from \$10 to \$20.
- Specifies that a hunter who has not completed a harvest report in a previous year must do so and pay any associated administrative penalties before they may acquire a new hunting license.

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**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT, AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES**

**Majority Report:** Do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Chapman, Chair; Chandler, Ranking Minority Member; Dent, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Fitzgibbon, Klicker, Kloba, Lekanoff, McEntire, Orcutt, Schmick and Springer.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Morgan and Ramos.

**Minority Report:** Without recommendation. Signed by 1 member: Representative

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

Shewmake, Vice Chair.

**Staff:** Rebecca Lewis (786-7339).

**Background:**

All individuals who hunt deer, elk, turkey, or bear are required to report their hunting successes or failures to the Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) within 10 days after the close of an eligible hunt, or by January 31, whichever date is later. Reports can be submitted to the Department either by way of a toll-free automated phone system or through the Department's Internet website. The Fish and Wildlife Commission may require a hunter who fails to report to pay an administrative penalty of no more than \$10 per hunter, and that hunter must complete a report and pay any outstanding administrative penalties before they may acquire a hunting license in the following year.

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**Summary of Bill:**

The maximum total administrative penalty per hunter for failure to report the taking or effort to harvest wildlife is increased from \$10 to \$20. A hunter who has not completed a harvest report in a previous year, rather than the previous year, must do so and pay any associated administrative penalties before they may acquire a new hunting license.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

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

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) This bill came from a constituent. If the Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) does not receive accurate hunting data, it can cause reductions in hunting opportunities in the following year. Raising fees is not ideal and there could be an amendment to create incentives to report rather than penalties for failure to report. The changes in this bill appear small, but the reason behind them is to increase hunter reporting compliance. Data is most meaningful when there is a high degree of reporting. Other states in the west have a reporting compliance rate of about 80 percent, whereas Washington's reporting compliance rate is about 60 percent. In New Mexico, a hunter cannot buy a new hunting license until they report. In Washington, there is a \$10 penalty for not reporting that is added to the price of a hunting license in the following year, but there is a loophole

that allows that penalty to go away if a person does not purchase a license in the following year. Increasing the penalty could provide a modest but meaningful improvement in compliance. Reporting in Washington is easy, it can be done on the same day as the hunt, or while still in the field. The Department uses a variety of data to manage wildlife populations. The data from the hunter reports is the most important source to set hunting seasons for the following fall. There is an incentive for reporting early. Hunters who report by January 10 are entered into a raffle for certain hunting licenses or tags the following year.

(Opposed) None.

**Persons Testifying:** Representative Klippert, prime sponsor; Michael Estes, Richland Rod and Gun Club; and Nate Pamplin, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.