

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1249

As Reported by House Committee On:
Agriculture & Natural Resources

Title: An act relating to hunter education.

Brief Description: Authorizing a one-year deferral of hunter education training.

Sponsors: Representatives Blake, Kretz, Orcutt, Takko and Haigh.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Agriculture & Natural Resources: 1/22/07, 1/31/07 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Authorizes the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) to issue a once in a lifetime, one year license deferral of hunter education.
- Authorizes the WDFW to revoke all hunting licenses and tags for both the deferred education licensee and the accompanying hunter and to order a suspension of hunting privileges for both hunters for one year if either is convicted of certain hunting violations.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives B. Sullivan, Chair; Blake, Vice Chair; Kretz, Ranking Minority Member; Dickerson, Eickmeyer, Grant, Kagi, Lantz, McCoy, Strow and VanDeWege.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 4 members: Representatives Warnick, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Hailey, Newhouse and Orcutt.

Staff: Jaclyn Ford (786-7339).

Background:

Hunter Education & Licensure

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.

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) has authority to license all hunters. The WDFW also is authorized to establish hunting, trapping, and fishing seasons and prescribe the time, place, manner, and methods that may be used to harvest or enjoy game fish and wildlife. The money collected from the sale of licenses, permits, tags, and stamps is deposited into the State Wildlife Account.

A hunter education certificate is required in order to hunt, for a person born after January 1, 1972, and purchasing a hunting license for the first time. The instruction includes at least 10 hours in the safe handling of firearms, safety, conservation, and sportsmanship. The WDFW may also accept certificates from other states indicating a person has successfully completed firearm safety, hunter education, or a similar course.

Hunting Violation Enforcement

If a person is convicted twice within 10 years for a violation involving unlawful hunting, killing, or possessing big game, the WDFW has authority to order revocation and suspension of all hunting privileges for two years. Or, if the WDFW finds the person had a willful or wanton disregard for conservation of fish or wildlife, the WDFW is authorized to suspend all hunting privileges permanently. Other suspensions exist for such crimes as: bear baiting, illegal use of dogs, failing to appear at a hearing to contest a WDFW infraction, and assault on WDFW employees while performing their duties.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

Hunter Education & Licensure

The WDFW is authorized to defer the hunter education certificate requirement for one year and allow an individual to hunt under the direct supervision and in the physical presence of an adult that has been licensed for at least the previous three years in Washington. The deferred hunter education license can only be issued once in a lifetime.

The application fee for a deferred hunter safety license may not exceed \$20 and must be used exclusively to administer the deferral program.

Hunting Violation Enforcement

If a violation occurs either by someone hunting with a deferred license, or by the supervising hunter that is accompanying the deferred licensee, the WDFW will revoke all hunting licenses and tags of both hunters and order a suspension of both hunter's hunting privileges for one year.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The original bill did not require a hunter to be Washington-licensed for three years in order to qualify as an accompanying hunter.

In the original bill, the penalty was not limited to big game and hunter safety violations and punishment included suspension of hunting privileges for two years. Additionally, the

original bill only punished the violator and not both the deferred education licensee and the accompanying supervising hunter.

The original bill did not specify that the fees obtained from the sale of the deferred hunter education license would be deposited into the Wildlife Reward Account.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 26, 2007.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This bill should help encourage people to participate in recreational hunting. This issue has been problematic for several years, and this bill would provide an additional avenue to obtain a hunting license for individuals trying to hunt in this state. Several other states are considering similar legislation.

(Opposed) This law is going to concentrate hunters with less education on less hunting acreage. Safety will be a serious problem if anyone is allowed to hunt without hunter education. Safety education has worked to reduce deaths and accidents.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Brian Blake, prime sponsor; Bruce Bjork, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife; Ed Owens, Hunters Heritage Council; and Bob Brown, Washington Hunter Education Instructors Association.

(Opposed) Tony Kastella, Three Creeks Hunting Education Team, Vancouver Wildlife League, and Orion the Hunter Institute.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.