

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1342

As Reported by House Committee On:

Fisheries, Ecology & Parks

Title: An act relating to hunter education certificate requirements.

Brief Description: Exempting active military personnel and veterans from hunter education certificate requirements.

Sponsors: Representatives Orcutt, Mielke, Cooper, McMahan, Anderson, Campbell and Bush.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Fisheries, Ecology & Parks: 2/4/03, 2/27/03 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Exempts certain active duty military personnel from the firearms training portion of the state's hunter education certification requirements.
- Allows recent military transferees to hunt for one year in Washington before having to complete a hunter education course.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES, ECOLOGY & PARKS

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 8 members: Representatives Cooper, Chair; Berkey, Vice Chair; Sump, Ranking Minority Member; Hinkle, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Buck, Hatfield, O'Brien and Pearson.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 1 member: Representative Upthegrove.

Staff: Jason Callahan (786-7117).

Background:

A recreational license issued by the Director of the Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) is required for any person seeking to hunt for wild animals in Washington. Prior to being issued a hunting license, individuals born after January 1, 1972 must

present the Director of the Department with a certification proving that the individual has completed a ten-hour course in the safe handling of firearms, safety, conservation, and sportsmanship. Vendors selling a hunting license may accept either a certification card or an expired hunting license from the previous hunting season as proof of program completion.

The Director of the Department is authorized to establish a training program, including the prescription of the type of instruction that must be provided, along with the qualification requirements for the instructors. The Director of the Department is also authorized to accept certificates from other states with similar course requirements.

Hunter education courses focuses on three broad areas: Firearms and outdoor safety; wildlife management, and hunter responsibility. Average classes involve four to six sessions and require the student to pass a written test and demonstrate firearms handling skills. The Department offers both a live course option and a home study option. Live courses are scheduled throughout the state.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

Active duty military personnel born after January 1, 1972 are exempt from the firearms handling portion of the hunter education certification requirement if the person is currently stationed at a Washington military installation and has completed a military-required firearms qualification within the 24 months prior to purchasing a hunting license.

In addition, a person on active duty in the military is not required to complete the hunter education certification requirements for one year if he or she was transferred to a Washington military base within 90 days prior to applying for a hunting license. The one-year exemption may only be claimed once.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

Under the original bill, certain classes of individuals would have been exempted from the requirement of obtaining certification of completion of a hunters education course before being issued a hunting license. Those individuals included: 1) All active military personnel permanently stationed at a Washington military installation; and 2) all Washington residents who have received an honorable discharge or a medical discharge from federal military service.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not Requested.

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

Testimony For: (Original bill) Military personnel that are transferred to Washington after the beginning of hunting season do not have the time available to complete a course in hunter education. Military personnel put their life on the line for the country, and should be able to go hunting on their weekend breaks. Service personnel should be recognized. Military training is sufficient to train its personnel in appropriate firearms safety.

Testimony Against: None.

(With concerns) Hunter education is about more than just firearms safety. It also teaches conservation training, sportsmanship, ethics, and the rights of private property owners. Since the program is funded with federal money, the Legislature must be careful to adhere to the financing's requirements.

Testified: (In support) Representative Orcutt, prime sponsor; and Representative Mielke, secondary sponsor.

(With concerns) Lembit Ratassepp, Department of Fish and Wildlife; Ed Owen, Hunters Heritage Council; and Lyle Lewis, Washington Hunter Education Instructors Association.