

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESHB 1114

As of March 26, 2009

Title: An act relating to hunters under the age of fourteen.

Brief Description: Regarding youth hunting privileges.

Sponsors: House Committee on Agriculture & Natural Resources (originally sponsored by Representatives Blake, Orcutt, Green, Springer, Van De Wege, Rolfes, McCune, Simpson, Goodman, Warnick and Conway).

Brief History: Passed House: 3/10/09, 70-26.

Committee Activity: Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation: 3/25/09.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, OCEAN & RECREATION

Staff: Karen Epps (786-7424)

Background: A recreational license issued by the Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) is required to hunt for classified wildlife in Washington. When purchasing a hunting license, persons under the age of 18 must present certification of the completion of a course of instruction of at least ten hours in the safe handling of firearms, safety, conservation, and sportsmanship. Hunter education courses focus on the topics of firearms and outdoor safety, wildlife management, and hunter responsibility.

Prior to 1994 hunters under the age of 14 were required to be accompanied by a parent, guardian, safety instructor, or other approved adult when they were in possession of a firearm for the purposes of hunting or target practice. Currently, there is no minimum age requirement when purchasing a hunting license or for enrollment in a hunter's education course.

Summary of Bill: All hunters under the age of 14 must be accompanied by a person over the age of 18 when hunting for wild birds and animals on public land. The accompanying adult hunter must stay within a range that permits continual unaided visual and auditory communication. The accompanying adult must have completed a hunting training course, or not be required to complete a hunting training course because of the person's age. It is a civil natural resources infraction for a person under the age of 14 to hunt without an adult companion on public land.

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.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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: DFW supports this bill. Individual families have more of an impact on the youth hunter who is under the age of 14 and their hunting practices. If youth hunters starts out hunting with a parent or other adult, they are not going to engage in separation during the hunt. Enforcement will use discretion when enforcing a law such as this. There have been various incidents involving juvenile hunters, including the incident in August 2008 in which the juvenile was the shooter. Approximately 7 percent of the hunting incidents identified by DFW since 1980 involved youth hunters under the age of 14.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Steve Crown, Mik Mikitik, DFW, Enforcement.