

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESHB 1199

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Natural Resources & Parks, April 2, 2013

Title: An act relating to ensuring hunter safety.

Brief Description: Ensuring hunter safety.

Sponsors: House Committee on Agriculture & Natural Resources (originally sponsored by Representatives Blake, Chandler, Takko, Buys, Kirby, Orcutt, Lytton, Van De Wege, Nealey, Hudgins, Stanford, Wilcox, Warnick, Ryu, Morrell and Tharinger; by request of Department of Fish and Wildlife).

Brief History: Passed House: 3/06/13, 97-0.

Committee Activity: Natural Resources & Parks: 3/28/13, 4/02/13 [DPA].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES & PARKS

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Pearson, Chair; Smith, Vice Chair; Rolfes, Ranking Member; Hewitt, Kline and Parlette.

Staff: Curt Gavigan (786-7437)

Background: Hunting License Requirement Generally. When purchasing a hunting license, persons born after January 1, 1972, must present certification that they completed a program of hunter education. The Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) may also accept certificates from other states. The Washington hunter education program consists of at least ten hours of instruction in safety, conservation, sportsmanship, and firearm handling. Average classes involve four to six sessions and require the student to pass a written test and, other than students who are in the military, demonstrate firearms handling skills. DFW also offers a home study option.

Hunter education courses are taught by volunteers, either individually or as a team, that are trained and certified by DFW. All instructors must be at least 21 years of age, and must undergo a background investigation by DFW.

An exemption from the hunter education requirement is available in the form of a one-year deferral once in a lifetime to hunt without completing the training course, as long as the

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hunter is doing so in the company of a hunter over the age of 18 who has been licensed for the prior three years.

Minimum Hunting Ages. Prior to 1994, all hunters under the age of 14 must have been 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 for a hunting license or for enrollment in a hunter education course.

Summary of Bill (Recommended Amendments): The Hunter Education Program Statute is Modified. The bill makes several changes to the statute governing the state's hunter education program including the following:

- changing the term sportsmanship to ethical hunting behavior as it relates to hunter education course content;
- specifying that a military service person must be a resident of, or stationed in, Washington to be exempt from the firearm skills portion of hunter education; and
- removing the requirement that the licensed hunter accompanying a hunter education deferred hunter have held a license for the prior three years.

Minimum Hunting Ages are Provided. No one under the age of eight is eligible to take a hunter education course or purchase a hunting license.

Additionally, all hunters under the age of 14 must be accompanied by a licensed hunter age 18 years or older unless the youth is hunting on private property owned or leased by an immediate family member. A violation of this requirement is a natural resources infraction.

Defines terms and makes technical changes.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY NATURAL RESOURCES & PARKS COMMITTEE (Recommended Amendments):

- Removes the hunter education training course and education certificate fee-setting authority provided in the underlying bill;
- Establishes eight years old as the minimum age to take hunter education or obtain a hunting license; and
- Makes technical changes.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Engrossed Substitute House Bill: PRO: This bill appropriately reinstates an age requirement for youth to hunt unaccompanied, maintaining that youth under the age of 14 while hunting must be accompanied by a licensed individual at

least 18 years of age. It also placed in statute DFW authority to charge a fee of up to \$20 for hunter safety course registration, adding needed revenue to the DFW hunter education program.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Bruce Bjork, Greg Schirato, DFW.