

Senate Fiscal Agency
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SFA



BILL ANALYSIS

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Senate Bill 963 (Substitute S-1 as reported)
Sponsor: Senator Joel D. Gougeon
Committee: Hunting, Fishing and Forestry

Date Completed: 3-23-98

RATIONALE

Evidently, hunting has seen an increasing interest among younger children. Hunter safety training courses teach children as young as 10 or 11 years old about the dangers and safety precautions of hunting. Under current law, however, only children 14 years of age or older are allowed to participate in deer hunting under the consent and supervision of a parent or legal guardian. Some people believe 12- and 13-year olds also would be capable of handling the responsibilities and skills required for a deer hunt, and therefore should be allowed to participate in deer hunting with a firearm under the consent and supervision of a parent or legal guardian.

CONTENT

The bill would amend the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act to permit the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to issue to a child at least 12 years old a license to hunt deer with a firearm. Currently, the DNR may issue a hunting license to a child who is at least 14 upon payment of a license fee and upon application by a parent or legal guardian, if the minor, when hunting on lands upon which the minor's parents are not regularly domiciled, will be accompanied by a parent, legal guardian, or an authorized person who is at least 17. Under the bill, the DNR could issue a hunting license to a minor child either if the child were hunting on land not regularly domiciled by a parent or guardian, or if the license were a license to hunt deer with a firearm and the child were at least 12 years old. The bill also would delete deer from the provision that prohibits a firearm license to hunt deer, bear, or elk with a firearm from being issued to a person who is under 14. The bill would retain a provision that a license to hunt may not be issued to a person who is under 12 years old.

In addition, a parent or legal guardian of a minor currently may not permit the minor to hunt under the authority of a license on land upon which the parent or guardian is not regularly domiciled without being accompanied by a parent, guardian, or authorized person who is at least 17 years of age. Under the bill, a parent or legal guardian of a minor could not permit the minor to hunt under the authority of a license without being accompanied by a parent, legal guardian, or authorized person who was at least 17 years either if the minor were hunting on land not regularly domiciled by a parent or guardian, or if the license were a license to hunt deer with a firearm and the child were at least 12 years old.

MCL 324.43517 & 324.43520

ARGUMENTS

(Please note: The arguments contained in this analysis originate from sources outside the Senate Fiscal Agency. The Senate Fiscal Agency neither supports nor opposes legislation.)

Supporting Argument

Many 12- and 13-year-olds are capable of the seriousness and patience required for the sport of hunting with a firearm. Since the bill would require the minor child to be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian when hunting off his or her own property, the bill still would give the parent or legal guardian the decision-making ability to determine whether the minor child should participate in deer hunting.

Response: The DNR has determined, after public hearings held in 1995-96 in 13 different locations throughout the State, that the public does not support lowering the deer hunting age from 14 years old to 12 years old.

Legislative Analyst: N. Nagata

FISCAL IMPACT

The bill would generate an indeterminate increase in revenues to the Game and Fish Protection Fund, depending upon the number of 12- and 13-year olds who purchased a deer hunting license.

Fiscal Analyst: G. Cutler

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This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan Senate staff for use by the Senate in its deliberations and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.