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FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Revised

House Bill 14 (Delegates O'Donnell and S. Howard)
Environment and Transportation Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Hunting Licenses - Exemption for Retired Members of the Armed Forces

This bill exempts retired former members of the U.S. Armed Forces from obtaining a hunting license to hunt on farmland that is in active farming status and owned by the individual or a specified family member of the individual. An individual hunting on farmland without a hunting license under the bill's exemption must possess a retired-military identification card, specified written permission from the landowner, and any required hunting stamps.

This bill takes effect June 1, 2015.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Special fund revenues for the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) decrease beginning in FY 2016 as a result of the bill's exemption due to a decrease in hunting license fees collected. Federal fund revenues decrease as a result of fewer hunting licenses being sold. Expenditures are not directly affected.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

Analysis

Current Law: With certain exceptions, a person may not hunt or attempt to hunt during open season and in any permitted manner any game birds and mammals in the State without a resident or nonresident hunter's license. Resident and nonresident hunting licenses enable the purchaser to hunt all legal game birds and mammals during any appropriate season without the purchase of additional stamps, unless the purchaser is hunting migratory

game birds, wild waterfowl, or deer during bow and arrow season or black powder season, in which case specified stamps are required.

A hunting license and specified stamps are not required if an individual is:

- a resident of Maryland (and his/her spouse) who owns property and who hunts only on that property. This also applies to (1) the landowner's children and grandchildren if they are younger than age 16 and (2) the landowner's children and grandchildren, and the spouse of the children or grandchildren if the child, grandchild, or their spouse, is at least age 16, lives on the property, has worked on the property for at least 30 days during the preceding 12 months, or manages the property. Each person must individually qualify under these criteria. To qualify for this exemption, a landowner does not need to live on the property but must be able to prove ownership;
- a person (and spouse) who (1) holds land under lease for agricultural purposes (or a sharecropper); (2) lives on the farmland; and (3) hunts only on the farmland. This also applies to (1) the lessee's children and grandchildren if they are younger than age 16 and (2) the lessee's children and grandchildren, and their spouses, if the child, grandchild, or spouse of the child or grandchild lives on the property, has worked on the property for at least 30 days during the preceding 12 months, or manages the property;
- a nonresident (and spouse) who owns a contiguous piece of farmland that is in both Maryland and a contiguous state may hunt on the Maryland portion of the property without a Maryland hunting license, if the person's primary residence is on the property and the other state offers reciprocity. This also applies to the owner's children and grandchildren if they are younger than age 16;
- a Maryland resident serving in the U.S. Armed Forces while on official leave in Maryland (whether stationed in Maryland or outside Maryland). The individual must possess a copy of official leave orders while hunting; or
- a person serving in the U.S. Armed Forces who has a service-connected disability and possesses a valid military identification while hunting.

Background: Varying fees apply for DNR hunting licenses and stamps. Lower hunting license fees also apply to persons younger than age 16 and residents who are age 65 or older. A hunting license is valid for the period from August 1 through July 31 each year. Funds generated from any license, stamp, application, or permit fee under wildlife provisions in the Natural Resources Article must be credited to the State Wildlife Management and Protection Fund and used for the scientific investigation, protection, propagation, and management of wildlife.

A resident hunting license is \$24.50 and a resident senior hunting license is \$5.00. A nonresident hunting license is \$130.00. A nonresident three-day hunting license is \$45.00.

State Revenues: DNR special fund revenues decrease beginning in fiscal 2016 as a result of retired veterans being exempt from hunting license requirements and associated license fees. Federal fund revenues also decrease as a result of fewer hunting licenses being sold. The amount of the decrease cannot be reliably estimated and depends on the number of retired veterans who are not required to purchase hunting licenses due to the bill's exemption.

The U.S. Census Bureau reports that Maryland's population in 2013 was 5,928,814. The Defense Manpower Data Center reports that there were 50,504 military retirees living in Maryland in 2012. This represents approximately 0.9% of the population. However, there is no data on the number of retired veterans who are hunters. DNR reports that in 2013, there were 76,065 resident regular hunting licenses sold, 9,462 resident senior hunting licenses sold, 14,571 nonresident hunting licenses sold, and 7,746 nonresident three-day licenses sold. The number of these licenses that were purchased by retired veterans is not known.

For illustrative purposes only, if 0.9% of those licensed in 2013 are exempt under the bill, approximately 971 licenses (685 regular hunting licenses, 85 resident senior licenses, 131 nonresident hunting licenses, and 70 nonresident three-day waterfowl and small game hunting licenses) would no longer be issued each year. This would result in a loss in DNR licensing fee revenue of approximately \$37,383 annually, assuming all licenses are issued by DNR. However, as noted, the actual special fund revenue decrease depends on the number of retired veterans who qualify for hunting license exemptions each year.

DNR advises that the decrease in the number of licenses issued due to the bill's exemption is likely less than the 971 assumed in the illustrative example provided above.

It is assumed that DNR's revenues are not materially affected in fiscal 2015 despite the bill's June 1, 2015 effective date.

Because the bill decreases the number of hunting licenses that would have otherwise been sold, DNR loses federal Wildlife Restoration and Basic Hunter Education program funding. DNR receives \$13 in federal funds for every hunting license purchased in the State. Under the illustrative example provided above, federal fund revenues decrease by \$12,623.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: HB 1547 of 2014 passed the House as amended and received a hearing in the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee, but no further action was taken.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Department of Natural Resources, U.S. Census Bureau, Department of Legislative Services

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