

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2020 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 1167 (Delegate Cox)
Environment and Transportation

Hunting and Fishing Licenses - Discounts, Complimentary Licenses, and Reporting

This bill makes permanent provisions established by Chapters 461, 462, and 463 of 2017 that provide discounted and complimentary hunting and fishing privileges for certain individuals. The bill also repeals related reporting requirements. Finally, the bill expands discounted and complimentary hunting and fishing privileges to individuals who (1) are members, retired members, or honorably discharged members of the U.S. Armed Forces or the National Guard; (2) provide emergency medical, fire, or rescue services, as specified; or (3) are the spouses, children, or spouses of any children of a person who qualifies for discounted or complimentary hunting and fishing privileges. **The bill takes effect June 1, 2020.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Special fund revenues decrease, potentially significantly, beginning in FY 2021 from foregone license, stamp, and permit fees. Federal fund revenues may decrease beginning in FY 2023 to the extent the bill reduces the number of hunting licenses sold. It is assumed that revenues are not materially affected in FY 2020. Expenditures are not directly affected.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

Analysis

Bill Summary/Current Law: Chapters 461, 462, and 463 of 2017, taken together, established discounted and complimentary hunting and fishing privileges for certain individuals. Chapter 463 was the most comprehensive and incorporated the provisions of Chapters 461 and 462.

Chapter 463 of 2017

Chapter 463 authorized the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to issue a lifetime complimentary angler's or sport fishing license to an out-of-state former prisoner of war or 100% service-connected disabled American veteran if the person's state of residence extends similar, reciprocal privileges. Persons issued a lifetime complimentary angler's license under that authorization are also exempt from a requirement to purchase a trout stamp in order to fish or possess trout in certain areas. The Act also established that specified veterans issued a lifetime complimentary hunting license are subject to competency in firearms and hunter safety requirements. Under current law, these provisions are set to terminate June 30, 2020. The bill repeals the termination date, making them permanent. The bill also expands these provisions to individuals who (1) are members, retired members, or honorably discharged members of the U.S. Armed Forces or the National Guard; (2) provide emergency medical, fire, or rescue services in the State or the person's state of residence; or (3) are the spouses, children, or spouses of any children of a person who meets one of those criteria.

Chapter 463 also required DNR to implement programs to provide discounted angler's, sport fishing, and hunting licenses, and associated stamps and permits to Maryland residents who are recipients of the Purple Heart award. Under current law, these provisions are set to terminate June 30, 2020. The bill repeals the termination date, making them permanent. The bill also expands these provisions to Maryland residents who (1) are members, retired members, or honorably discharged members of the U.S. Armed Forces or the National Guard; (2) provide emergency medical, fire, or rescue services in the State; or (3) are the spouses, children, or spouses of any children of a person who qualifies for the discounted licenses, stamps, and permits under this provision.

Chapter 463 required DNR to report the Governor and the General Assembly, by December 31, 2019, on (1) the number of discounted licenses, stamps, and permits issued to recipients of the Purple Heart award under the Act; (2) the availability, in other states, of complimentary hunting and fishing licenses to Maryland residents who are former prisoners of war and 100% service-connected disabled American veterans; (3) the number of such licenses issued to Maryland residents; and (4) the number of complimentary hunting and fishing licenses issued by DNR to out-of-state former prisoners of war and 100% service-connected disabled American veterans. The bill repeals this requirement.

Additional Discounted and Commemorative License Provisions under Current Law

The Recreational License Donation Program enables a person to purchase and donate a hunting license, among other licenses, and any corresponding stamps. DNR may then issue the donated license or stamp, at no cost, to a Gold Star recipient, a disabled veteran, a disabled member of the U.S. Armed Forces, or a permanently disabled person who requires the use of a wheelchair. A recipient of a donated license or stamp must be sponsored by a qualifying nonprofit charitable organization that provides recreational hunting or fishing opportunities for Gold Star recipients, disabled veterans, disabled members of the U.S. Armed Forces, or permanently disabled persons who require the use of a wheelchair. In addition, a recipient of a donated hunting license is subject to specified statutory hunting safety requirements. This program is unchanged by the bill.

Complimentary Hunting Licenses

Under current law, a complimentary hunting license provides the license holder with the same privileges as a standard hunting license. DNR may issue a complimentary hunting license to the President of the United States, the governor of any state, or an official or an enforcement officer of the game and fish management agency of another state that reciprocally offers complimentary hunting licenses.

Current law also authorizes DNR to issue a lifetime complimentary hunting license to (1) a Maryland resident who is certified as a former prisoner of war or as a 100% service-connected disabled American veteran and (2) an out-of-state person who is certified as a former prisoner of war or as a 100% service-connected disabled American veteran if the person's state of residence extends similar privileges to former prisoners of war or disabled veterans of this State. As noted above, Chapter 463 established that a recipient of a lifetime complimentary hunting license is subject to statutory competency in firearms and hunter safety requirements; the bill makes this provision permanent. The bill also expands the lifetime complimentary hunting authorization provisions to individuals who (1) are members, retired members, or honorably discharged members of the U.S. Armed Forces or the National Guard; (2) provide emergency medical, fire, or rescue services in the State or the person's state of residence; or (3) are the spouses, children, or spouses of any children of a person who meets one of those criteria.

Fees

Varying fees apply for DNR hunting and fishing licenses. The annual fees for resident hunting, angler's, and Chesapeake Bay and coastal sport fishing licenses are \$24.50, \$20.50, and \$15.00, respectively. Lower fees apply to certain junior, senior, and short-term licenses. The fee for a trout stamp is \$5 for residents. The fees for residents for the most

widely purchased hunting stamps and permits are generally between \$5 and \$10. The bill does not change any of these fees.

Background: On July 1, 2017, DNR announced that, pursuant to Chapter 463, any Maryland veteran who has received a Purple Heart qualifies for a 50% discount on Maryland hunting and fishing licenses. Applicants must apply for the discount program at one of DNR's regional licensing and registration service centers. Although DNR was unable to provide specific data available on the number of licenses, permits, and stamps sold at a discount to veterans awarded the Purple Heart award in the State, DNR advises that it has a record of 48 customers with Purple Heart certification in the department's licensing system.

DNR advises that during the 2018-2019 hunting season, the sale of resident hunting licenses, stamps and associated permits generated \$3,171,295, and the sale of nonresident licenses generated \$3,101,666. Additionally, during the 2019 fishing season, the sale of 483,997 recreational fishing licenses generated \$8,946,287.

DNR has not yet issued the reports that were required by Chapters 461, 462, and 463.

State Revenues: Special fund revenues may decrease significantly, beginning in fiscal 2021, due to the issuance of additional discounted and complimentary licenses and associated stamps and permits as a result of the bill. The amount of the loss in special fund revenues cannot be reliably estimated at this time, but given the breadth of people who may be eligible for discounts or complimentary license and associated stamps and permits, the decrease in special fund revenues could be significant. It is assumed that revenues are not materially affected in fiscal 2020, despite the bill's June 1, 2020 effective date.

To the extent the bill decreases the number of hunting licenses that would have otherwise been sold, DNR loses federal Wildlife Restoration Fund revenues, which are commonly referred to as Pittman-Robertson Funds, from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. DNR receives \$13 in federal funds for every hunting license purchased in the State. The number of hunting licenses sold affects federal funding two fiscal years later.

Special fund revenues continue to decrease minimally on an annual basis beyond fiscal 2020 due to the repeal of the termination dates for Chapters 461, 462, and 463.

Small Business Effect: DNR works with license agents who are authorized to issue fishing and hunting licenses. Agents retain \$1 for each non-tidal and tidal fishing license, \$1.50 for each hunting license, and 75 cents for each hunting stamp sold. To the extent that DNR issues additional complimentary licenses under the bill, revenues for these license agents decreases.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Baltimore City; Montgomery and Prince George's counties; Maryland Association of Counties; City of Bowie; Maryland Municipal League; Department of Budget and Management; Department of Natural Resources; Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services; Department of State Police; Department of Veterans Affairs; Military Department; Department of Legislative Services

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