

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2006 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Revised

Senate Bill 521

(Senator Astle)

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Environmental Matters

Natural Resources - Hunting Via an Internet Connection - Prohibition

This bill prohibits a person from shooting at or killing a bird or animal in the State with a gun or other device operated or accessed via an Internet connection. A person who violates this prohibition is guilty of a misdemeanor and on conviction is subject to a fine of up to \$10,000 or imprisonment for up to one year, or both. In addition, if convicted of a violation under the bill, the person's hunting privilege or hunting license must be revoked and the person must be denied the privilege of hunting in the State for at least two years but not more than five years.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Enforcement could be handled with existing budgeted resources. The criminal penalty provisions of this bill are not expected to significantly affect State finances or operations.

Local Effect: The criminal penalty provisions of this bill are not expected to significantly affect local finances or operations.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) regulates hunting in the State.

Background: In early 2005, a Texas rancher launched an Internet-based system that gave paying customers around the world the opportunity to shoot animals on his land by taking aim on their computer screens and clicking a mouse. In response, several states have proposed legislation banning residents from engaging in the practice. According to the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, 13 states, including Texas, have since banned Internet hunting and 7 states have proposed legislation addressing the issue. In addition, H.R. 1558, the Computer-Assisted Remote Hunting Act, which was introduced in the U.S. Congress in April 2005, would prohibit and establish penalties for knowingly making available a computer-assisted remote hunt.

According to DNR, since Texas banned the activity, Internet hunting is not currently being done anywhere in the nation.

Additional Comments: DNR's regulations for deer hunting require the hunter to immediately take physical possession of the kill and then comply with specified check-in requirements. According to DNR, if the deer and hunter are separated by any significant distance, this would not be possible and there would be a violation.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Department of Natural Resources, Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services, International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, The Library of Congress, The Humane Society of the United States, Department of Legislative Services

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