

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2011 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

Senate Bill 904 (Senator Getty)
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

**Natural Resources - Certificate of Competency in Firearms and Hunter Safety -
Exception**

This bill authorizes specified individuals to procure a hunting license without obtaining a Department of Natural Resources (DNR) certificate of competency in firearms and hunter safety or providing other specified evidence. The exemption applies to residents and nonresidents who are active duty U.S. armed forces personnel or members of the reserve components stationed in the State.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: DNR special fund revenues may increase in FY 2012 and 2013 and special/federal fund revenues may increase in FY 2014 and future years to the extent the bill results in an increase in the number of licenses sold. While the magnitude of the increase is unknown, it is not anticipated to be significant. Expenditures are not materially affected.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: Minimal, as discussed below.

Analysis

Current Law: DNR must prescribe, institute, and coordinate a statewide course of instruction in conservation and the handling of firearms.

To purchase a hunting license or to hunt in Maryland, individuals younger than age 18 must secure a certificate of competency in firearms and hunter safety, and other individuals must:

- produce a certificate of competency in firearms and hunter safety;
- produce a hunting license issued prior to July 1, 1977, or a written affidavit stating one was possessed; or
- indicate that they are purchasing a nonresident license to hunt only wild waterfowl.

Chapter 354 of 2010 authorizes specified individuals to hunt on private property without a hunter's license, bow and arrow stamp, black powder stamp, or bonus antlered deer stamp. The exemption applies to individuals who are serving in the U.S. armed forces, have a service-connected disability, and possess valid military identification while hunting.

Background: Hunter education programs have been mandatory in the State since 1977. Currently, more than 1,100 volunteer instructors teach over 250 hunter education courses to over 8,000 people annually. The Maryland hunter education course lasts a minimum of 10 hours, and students must attend all class sessions to pass. The course includes instruction in hunter responsibility, firearms and ammunition, firearm handling and safety, marksmanship and shooting fundamentals, principles of wildlife management, bowhunting, muzzleloader hunting, tree stand safety, and legal requirements. The course requires students to pass a 50-question exam, demonstrate to an instructor safe handling of a firearm through practical exercises, and participate in live firing.

State Revenues: The bill may result in an increase in special fund revenues from additional hunting license sales in fiscal 2012 and 2013 and in special/federal fund revenues in fiscal 2014 and future years; however, the magnitude of the increase is unknown.

Information about the number of individuals who are serving in the U.S. armed forces or reserve components in the State and who would take advantage of the bill's exemption is not available. However, according to the Maryland Military Department, there are 6,430 Maryland National Guardsmen, and it is reasonable to assume that there are approximately 25,300 active duty military personnel at military installations located throughout the State.

DNR estimates that less than 100 individuals will take advantage of the exemption annually and purchase a hunting license that otherwise would not have been purchased.

For illustrative purposes, assuming the exemption prompts 50 residents and 25 nonresidents to purchase hunting licenses, which cost \$24.50 for residents and \$130 for nonresidents, annual special fund revenues increase by \$4,475, assuming all licenses are issued by DNR

To the extent the bill increases the number of hunting licenses that would have otherwise been sold, DNR gains federal Pittman Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act funding starting in fiscal 2014. DNR receives \$18 in federal funds for every hunting license purchased in the State.

Small Business Effect: DNR works with agents, which in most cases are small businesses, to issue hunting and fishing licenses. Generally, agents retain (1) \$0.75 for each resident senior hunting license and individual hunting stamp sold and issued; and (2) \$1.50 for each resident junior, nonresident junior, resident regular, nonresident regular, and nonresident three-day hunting license sold and issued. Therefore, to the extent the bill prompts individuals to secure a license from agents, agents' fee revenue increases; however, the impact is not anticipated to be significant.

To the extent the bill prompts individuals to hunt in Maryland, small business revenues increase. Based on the 2006 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife Associated Recreation, nonresident hunters spent an average of \$24 per day or \$1,101 annually in Maryland.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: HB 1231 (Delegate Ready) - Environmental Matters.

Information Source(s): Department of Natural Resources, Maryland Military Department, Department of Legislative Services

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