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## SR. CIT. HUNTING/FISHING LIC. BENEFITS

House Bill 4019 as introduced  
First Analysis (2-21-89)

**RECEIVED**

**APR 17 1989**

Sponsor: Rep. Donald Van Singel  
Committee: Tourism, Fisheries, & Wildlife

Mich. State Law Libra

### **THE APPARENT PROBLEM:**

Within recent years the state has increased its efforts to ensure that its recreational resources are available to all citizens. Efforts to increase accessibility to recreational resources have taken several forms, including reduced rates for hunting and fishing licenses for certain groups. (Senior citizens may receive all hunting and fishing privilege for a \$5 fee; regular licenses and permits for the same privileges for a non-senior citizen cost \$74.) Veterans' advocates say that many of the state's veterans with service-connected disabilities are on fixed incomes and may not partake of the state's hunting and fishing resources because of high license costs. Some veterans have suggested that it is unfair that they have risked their lives to protect their state and its resources only to find hunting and fishing license costs so exorbitant that they cannot enjoy those sports. The veterans suggest that if there is a group in society that deserves to receive hunting and fishing privileges at reduced rates, it should be a group which has fought hard to protect those privileges.

### **THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:**

The bill would amend the Hunting and Fishing License Act to allow a veteran who has a service-connected total or permanent total disability rating for compensation or who was receiving disability retirement pay from a branch of the uniformed armed services to be eligible to purchase a senior citizen hunting or fishing license. The licenses would not be available for veterans with disability ratings or retirement pay due to blindness. The director of the Department of Natural Resources could demand proof of eligibility under the bill. The bill would require licensees to possess proof of eligibility when hunting and fishing and would require the licensee to furnish proof upon the request of a law enforcement or conservation officer.

MCL 316.320

### **FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:**

According to the Department of Natural Resources, the maximum loss for the state would be \$69 per license; however, since the department does not know how many people will actually purchase the licenses, the total costs for the state cannot be determined. (2-17-89)

### **ARGUMENTS:**

#### **For:**

It is not fair that some segments of society can enjoy our state's resources while other citizens who have risked their lives to protect our state cannot enjoy the resources. Further, it is particularly unfortunate that veterans who have incurred disabilities while protecting the state's resources are not able to enjoy those resources. Hunting and fishing are popular pastimes for many veterans with disabilities. However, many veterans with service-connected disabilities are on fixed incomes and have suggested that if the costs of fishing and hunting

licenses continue to increase, they may not be able to enjoy their favorite sports. The bill will address this issue by allowing veterans with service-connected disabilities to purchase licenses at reduced rates.

**Response:** The bill affects veterans with total service-connected disabilities and individual unemployability disabilities (a disability rating designation of 60-100 percent for persons who may not be totally disabled but who, because of their disability, are unable to achieve gainful employment). Some veterans groups have suggested that veterans with total service-connected disabilities should be able to afford the full price of licenses because they receive the maximum amount of benefits under the law, while veterans without total service-connected disabilities should be allowed to purchase licenses at reduced rates since they do not receive full disability benefits.

#### **Against:**

There are approximately 1.1 million veterans in Michigan, and 88,560 with service-connected disabilities, and only 4,500 with total service-connected disability ratings. It has been suggested by some veterans groups that the people affected by the bill would not be able to take advantage of the state's hunting and fishing resources. Thus, the bill should be expanded to include other groups or should be withdrawn.

#### **Against:**

If the legislature decides to grant an exemption for this segment of the state's population, then general fund money should be used to reimburse the fish and game fund for money lost due to the selling of licenses at reduced rates. When the legislature acts on behalf of society to make choices concerning reduced rates for some, society should bear the costs. This is currently done to make up for revenue lost due to licenses sold to senior citizens at reduced rates.

### **POSITIONS:**

The Disabled American Veterans support the bill. (2-16-89)

The Department of Natural resources opposes the bill. (2-16-89)

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