



**House  
Legislative  
Analysis  
Section**

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

House Bill 4019 as passed by the House  
Second Analysis (4-10-89)

**RECEIVED**  
MAY 23 1989

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

Mich. State Law Library

**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 been determined by the federal government to be permanently and totally disabled and entitled to veterans benefits at the 100 percent rate to be eligible to purchase a senior citizen hunting or fishing license. The licenses would not be available for veterans with a 100 percent disability rating 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.

Under the act, the department is required to determine the total number of senior citizen hunting and fishing licenses issued and fees collected in the preceding year and to determine the total fees that would have been collected if senior citizens had been required to purchase certain licenses at the full fee. The department deducts the amount of fees collected during the preceding year from the amount that would have been collected if senior citizens had been charged the full fee. The difference is the amount which would otherwise be collected, and the act requires the legislature to annually appropriate from the general fund a sum equal to the fees that would otherwise be collected. The sum is then credited to the Game and Fish Protection Fund. The bill would require the Department of Natural Resources to process licenses issued under the bill in the same manner as licenses issued to senior citizens for purposes of receiving the annual appropriations from the legislature that are credited to the fund.

MCL 316.320

**FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:**

According to the Department of Natural Resources, the total costs for the state cannot be determined since the department does not know how many people will actually purchase the licenses. (4-10-89)

**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:** 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.

**POSITIONS:**

The Disabled American Veterans support the bill. (4-4-89)

The Department of Natural Resources takes no position on the bill at this time. (4-10-89)

H.B. 4019 (4-10-89)