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BILL ANALYSIS



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Senate Bill 817 (as introduced 2-24-16)
Sponsor: Senator Patrick J. Colbeck
Committee: Veterans, Military Affairs and Homeland Security

Date Completed: 5-26-16

CONTENT

The bill would amend the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act to allow a veteran or an active member of the military to obtain an all-species fishing license free of charge. The Department of Natural Resources could demand proof of eligibility for the free license. The licensee would have to possess proof of eligibility when taking fish and would have to furnish that proof upon the request of a peace officer.

"Veteran" would mean an honorably discharged member of the U.S. Armed Forces. "Active member of the military" would mean a person enlisted or commissioned as an officer in the U.S. Armed Forces.

MCL 324.43537

Legislative Analyst: Patrick Affholter

FISCAL IMPACT

The bill would have a negative fiscal impact on the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) totaling between \$2.9 million and \$3.2 million or more per year, largely to the Game and Fish Protection Fund, and no fiscal impact on local units of government.

The DNR does not collect demographic data that is of use in determining how many active duty servicemembers or veterans currently purchase fishing licenses, but an estimate for veterans can be obtained by assuming that they are no more or less likely to purchase a fishing license than those who have not served. The number of veterans living in Michigan was about 658,000 as of September 30, 2014, and the population of Michigan over age 18 was about 7,615,000, putting the adult population of Michigan who are veterans at about 8.65%. In fiscal year 2014-15, the DNR received about \$31.1 million in Game and Fish Protection Fund revenue from the sale of fishing licenses; if 8.65% of this revenue were lost under the bill, due to the exemption for veterans the cost would be about \$2.7 million. Additionally, there could be a loss of between \$140,000 and \$430,000 in Federal funds as several Federal wildlife grants use the number of paid hunting and fishing licenses sold as a metric for grant apportionment to states. By making fishing licenses free, the bill would likely make them ineligible to be counted toward Michigan's apportionment.

These revenue losses likely would be increased by the exemption for servicemembers. The amount cannot be estimated, however, because there are limited data as to how many active duty servicemembers reside in Michigan.

Fiscal Analyst: Josh Sefton

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