

DISABLED VETERANS FIREARM DEER SEASON

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House Bill 5031

Sponsor: Rep. Richard LeBlanc

Committee: Tourism, Outdoor Recreation, and Natural Resources

Complete to 10-22-07

A SUMMARY OF HOUSE BILL 5031 AS INTRODUCED 7-18-07

The bill would amend the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act to establish a firearm deer season for disabled veterans throughout the state, corresponding with the youth firearm deer hunting days. A pilot program allowing disabled veterans to hunt during the youth hunt in three counties was established earlier this session by Senate Bill 633 (Public Act 60 of 2007). The bill would expand the program to all areas of the state for the future.

Season. The season for disabled veterans would correspond with the youth firearm deer hunting days, if any are established by the Natural Resources Commission. (This year, the youth hunt and pilot disabled veterans firearm deer season under Senate Bill 633 was held in late September of 2007.)

Bag limit. A disabled veteran could take one deer during the disabled veteran season.

License. A disabled veteran taking a deer during this season would have to possess one of the following:

- A current firearm deer license.
- A combination deer license.
- An antlerless deer license.
- A deer management assistance permit authorizing the disabled veteran to take a deer with a firearm and issued for the area or land upon which the veteran is hunting.

Definition of disabled veteran. In the bill as introduced, "disabled veteran" would mean a resident who has been determined by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs to be permanently and totally disabled as a result of military service and entitled to veterans' benefits at the 100 percent rate, for a disability other than blindness.

[Note: In Senate Bill 633 (Public Act 60 of 2007), the definition of "disabled veteran" was expanded to include not only veterans rated 100 percent disabled (for any disability other than blindness) but also those veterans rated less than 100 percent disabled but deemed unemployable. Unless amended, this bill would only include veterans rated 100 percent disabled.

The Individual Unemployability (IU) program enables veterans rated 60 percent or more disabled (but less than 100 percent) to receive benefits at the 100 percent rate if their disabilities prevent them from working. According to the VA Office of Inspector General, six percent of Michigan's veterans had an IU rating and 7 percent were rated 100 percent disabled, for a total of 13 percent receiving veterans' disability benefits at the 100 percent rate in 2004.

IU is one of the fastest growing segments within the VA Disability Compensation program, increasing 103 percent from FY 2000 to FY 2005. Of the IU group, common diagnoses include mental health conditions, including posttraumatic stress syndrome or PTSD (35 percent), musculoskeletal conditions (29 percent) and cardiovascular conditions (13 percent).]

FISCAL IMPACT:

This bill would have an indeterminate fiscal impact on the Game and Fish Protection Fund. There may be a revenue increase if the earlier hunting season enables more disabled veterans to participate in the firearm deer season. It should be noted that revenue may be credited to an earlier fiscal year if licenses are purchased before October 1.

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■ This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan House staff for use by House members in their deliberations, and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.