

Veterans' and Military Affairs Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-6314

AN ACT PROVIDING FOR DISCOUNTED HUNTING, TRAPPING AND FISHING LICENSES FOR VETERANS AND ACTIVE-DUTY MEMBERS OF THE ARMED

Title: FORCES.

Vote Date: 2/16/2023

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 2/7/2023

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Veterans' & Military Affairs Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill offers veterans and active-duty service members a 50% reduction on license or permit fees for any firearms hunting, sport fishing, trapping, or archery hunting.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

[Joseph Bachar, New England States Coordinator, Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation \(CSF\)](#): Opposes as written, suggests and would support with revisions

I write to express a suggested amendment to House Bill 6314 (H. 6314) that is designed to preserve the integrity of the "user pays – public benefits" American System of Conservation Funding (ASCF). There are considerations associated with hunting, fishing, and trapping license exemptions, such as those included in H. 6314, that must be considered to ensure the future success of hunter, angler, and trapper supported conservation efforts in Connecticut. Funded by the sale of hunting and fishing licenses and permits, along with revenue generated from self-imposed excise taxes through the Pittman-Robertson Act and Dingell-Johnson Act with Wallop-Breaux Amendments, the ASCF serves as a primary source of revenue for the Bureau of Natural Resources, which is housed within the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP). While the implications of discounting or outright waiving license requirements on license revenue are obvious, what is less known is the impact of license exemptions on the ability of DEEP to fully claim its portion of revenue made available through the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration (Pittman-Robertson) Act. We respectfully ask the Committee to consider amending the bill to include specific language that

creates a reimbursement to DEEP from the general fund for any license or permit revenue forgone as a result of this and any other free or discounted license or permit provided by the legislature going forward. In so doing, the legislature will retain the opportunity to provide these incentives or rewards to deserving demographics without unduly threatening the ability of DEEP to receive the funding necessary to continue its work managing Connecticut's public trust fish and wildlife resources for the benefit of all sportsmen and women.

Katie S. Dykes, Commissioner, Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection: Opposes this bill

This proposal would directly reduce DEEP's license revenues by at least approximately \$90,000- \$120,000 based on our estimates of the numbers of service members in the state. These discounts will disproportionately impact fisheries and wildlife conservation, management, and related recreational opportunities. These programs rely on license fee revenues and federal funding. These license revenues are also used in part to leverage federal funding for conservation and management relative to fishing, hunting, and trapping. Given this needed leverage, actual negative impacts to these programs will be greater than a simple decrease in our license revenues. Reductions in our resources are counterproductive to providing quality outdoor opportunities for everyone. Moreover, approximately 50% of Connecticut veterans are already currently eligible for free licenses available to people 65 and older. DEEP invests significant resources in our hunting and fishing programs to provide free training, equipment and hands on experiences to many members of the public - including veterans.

Anna M. Posniak, Co-Chair, Connecticut Town Clerks Association (CTCA) Legislative & Elections Committee: Supports this bill

The Connecticut Town Clerk's Association (CTCA), as the state's largest sportsmen licensing agent, strongly supports the efforts of HB 6314 to provide current military personnel and veterans access to discounted hunting, trapping and fishing licenses. Town Clerks recognize that HB 6314 not only acknowledges our military members' service to our country, but also recognizes the unique financial challenges and needs of our active-duty personnel and veterans. Moreover, research shows outdoor recreation and time spent in nature provides a relaxing and deeply cathartic experience that can offer profound healing effects for individuals suffering from PTSD.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

None submitted

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None submitted

Reported by: Robert Mayne

Date: March 6, 2023