

CONFIDENTIAL
LEGISLATIVE BILL REVIEW FORM: 2015

Bill Number: H.296 Name of Bill: An act relating to sport shooting ranges.

Agency/ Dept: Fish and Wildlife Department Author of Bill Review: Daneil Pieterse

Date of Bill Review: 2/24/25 Related Bills and Key Players: _____

Status of Bill: (check one): ☒ Upon Introduction _____ As passed by 1st body _____ As passed by both

Recommended Position:

☐ Support ☒ Oppose ☐ Remain Neutral ☐ Support with modifications identified in #8 below

Analysis of Bill

1. **Summary of bill and issue it addresses.** The Bill Proposes to amend the provisions related to the operation of sport shooting ranges. Under the Bill, a sport shooting range would be afforded a rebuttal presumption that it does not create nuisance if certain conditions are met. The Bill would repeal the limitation that only an owner of property abutting a sport shooting range may bring nuisance claim against the range. In addition, the Bill would establish the authorized hours of operation of sport shooting ranges in the State. The Bill also would repeal the prohibition on municipal regulation of firearm discharge at an existing sport shooting range.
2. **Is there a need for this bill?** No, sport shooting ranges are an outdoor recreational necessity in the State, provide shooters and spectators a safe place to participate in sport shooting. These facilities reduce the number of incidents and nuisances associated with unsafe shooting areas in the State. Current regulations sport shooting clubs/ranges are adequate and the Department is currently working on rules to provide greater oversight of state-owned facilities. In addition, this bill will potentially expand the number of people who can bring lawsuits against shooting ranges.
3. **What are likely to be the fiscal and programmatic implications of this bill for this Department?**
This Bill would reduce the availability of shooting ranges to the users and lead to more unsafe, unregulated shooting in undesignated areas throughout the State. Many recreational and sport shooters only have weekends off to practice and hone their skills. Limiting the hours of ranges should be determined by the local club based on the location of the club, usage and demand. If nuisance claims are brought on by anyone other than the abutting landowners to the range, ranges will face more uncredited opposition and possible closure. This would lead to the inability of shooters to participate in events and recreational activities, causing displacement and unregulated shooting. If anything the amendments proposed to this Bill puts public health, safety and welfare at risk.
4. **What might be the fiscal and programmatic implications of this bill for other departments in state government, and what is likely to be their perspective on it?** Watershed Management and Waste Management & Prevention would have new lead management problems caused by displaced range users shooting in undesignated areas. In addition, the Department of Public Safety could be called upon to enforce shooting range hour violations.

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5. What might be the fiscal and programmatic implications of this bill for others, and what is likely to be their perspective on it? Recreational shooters, hunters and sportsman will be forced to find new places to practice, displacing them into unregulated, unsafe areas. Their displacement may lead to unsafe interactions with other outdoor recreational users and homeowners alike. Law enforcement officials will have difficulties dealing with unregulated shooting in undesignated areas

6. Other Stakeholders:

6.1 Who else is likely to support the proposal and why? Some people who live in proximity to shooting ranges. Uninformed members of the public being lead to believe that the revision of this Bill will be promoting public health, safety and welfare.

6.2 Who else is likely to oppose the proposal and why? Recreational sportsman and shooters, Hunters, NRA, Vermont Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs, Vermont Bearhound association, these are the users, supporters & owners of these facilities. They depend on being able to use these facilities and practice their skills in a safe, controlled manner.

7. Rationale for recommendation: Vermont has a long and proud history of conservation and regulated hunting and shooting sports. These sports have a rich cultural heritage, as well as an indispensable wildlife management role. However, the future of these sports are, in part, dependent on the availability of safe, environmentally responsible shooting ranges for hunter & shooter skill development.

8. Specific modifications that would be needed to recommend support of this bill:

9. Gubernatorial appointments to board or commission?

Commissioner has reviewed this document:  Date: 4/10/15

Secretary has reviewed this document:  Date: 4-21-15