

Department of Legislative Services  
Maryland General Assembly  
2013 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 812 (Delegate Beitzel, *et al.*)  
Environmental Matters

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Hunting - Certificate of Competency and Safety - Veterans and Active Duty  
Military

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This bill exempts veterans and individuals serving on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces from completing practical or field components of a Department of Natural Resources' (DNR) firearms and hunting safety and competency course that is a prerequisite for obtaining a State hunting license. The bill requires these individuals to complete only a written examination.

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Fiscal Summary

**State Effect:** The bill is not expected to materially impact State finances.

**Local Effect:** None.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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Analysis

**Current Law:** DNR must prescribe a course of instruction in conservation and in competency and safety in the handling of firearms.

To purchase a hunting license or to hunt in Maryland, individuals younger than age 18 must secure a certificate of competency in firearms and hunter safety, and other individuals must:

- produce a certificate of competency in firearms and hunter safety;

- produce a hunting license issued prior to July 1, 1977, or a written affidavit stating one was possessed; or
- indicate that they are purchasing a nonresident license to hunt only wild waterfowl.

A “veteran” is, generally, an individual who served on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces, other than for training, and was discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable.

**Background:** Hunter education programs have been mandatory in the State since 1977. Currently, more than 1,100 volunteer instructors teach over 250 hunter education courses to over 8,000 people annually. The Maryland hunter education course lasts a minimum of 10 hours, and students must attend all class sessions to pass. The course includes instruction in hunter responsibility, firearms and ammunition, firearm handling and safety, marksmanship and shooting fundamentals, principles of wildlife management, bowhunting, muzzleloader hunting, tree stand safety, and legal requirements. The course requires students to pass a 50-question exam, demonstrate to an instructor safe handling of a firearm through practical exercises, and participate in live firing.

The Department of Veterans Affairs advises that some veterans and active duty members of the U.S. Armed Forces have limited or outdated familiarity with weapons.

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### **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** Department of Budget and Management, Department of Natural Resources, Department of Veterans Affairs, Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - February 12, 2013  
mlm/lgc

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