

SUBJECT: Reduced hunting and fishing license fees for active military personnel

COMMITTEE: Defense Affairs and State-Federal Relations — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 6 ayes — Corte, Campbell, Herrero, Hodge, Leibowitz, Merritt
0 nays
3 absent — Berman, Moreno, Noriega

WITNESSES: For — None
Against — None
On — Brenda Dille, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

BACKGROUND: Section 42.012(b) of the Parks and Wildlife Code allows the Parks and Wildlife Commission to lower or waive the fee for a resident hunting license for three classes of people: those under 17 years of age; those 65 years of age or older; and those participating in an event sponsored by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

Section 46.004(b) allows the Parks and Wildlife Commission to lower or waive the fee for a resident fishing license for four classes of people: those who have a commercial fisherman’s license in Texas; those who are blind; those under 17 years of age; and those 65 years of age or older.

DIGEST: HB 1076 would amend Parks and Wildlife Code Sec. 42.012(b) and Sec. 46.004(b) by adding active duty U.S. military personnel to the class of people eligible for reduced license fees.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2005.

SUPPORTERS SAY: The brave men and women of the U.S. military risk their lives to protect our country, and the state should express some of its appreciation by allowing these men and women to obtain hunting and fishing licenses at a reduced fee or for no fee at all.

HB 1076 would not require the Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission to reduce fees – it simply would give the commission the discretion to do so. If the department needed the funds, it would not be required to reduce the licensing fees.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

If the Legislature allowed licensing fees to be reduced or waived for active military personnel, then other groups of equally deserving people (such as firemen or policemen) also would seek to have their licensing fees reduced or waived.

CSSB 1, the general appropriations bill, proposes cutting the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's budget by more than 10 percent this biennium. The department cannot afford the loss in revenue that would result from reducing fees for active military personnel.

**OTHER
OPPONENTS
SAY:**

As currently written, HB 1076 would give the Parks and Wildlife Commissioner discretion as to whether to reduce or waive the licensing fees. To make the bill truly meaningful for our troops, the reduction in fees should be mandatory, not discretionary.

NOTES:

The fiscal note concludes that HB 1076 would result in lost revenue of \$796,676 per year to the general revenue-dedicated game, fish, and water safety account.