

Date of Hearing: May 14, 2025

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

AB 1316 (Addis) – As Introduced February 21, 2025

Policy Committee: Water, Parks and Wildlife

Vote: 8 - 3

Urgency: No

State Mandated Local Program: No

Reimbursable: No

**SUMMARY:**

This bill requires the Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) to provide information about firearm safety to every person who purchases a hunting license.

Specifically, this bill:

- 1) Requires, beginning July 1, 2027, DFW to ensure that every person who purchases a hunting license receives, at minimum, information on all of the following topics: (a) safe storage of firearms, (b) California's child access prevention laws, (c) liability for parents and guardians who should have known their child could access a firearm at home, (d) basic California firearm laws, and (e) how to legally transfer or relinquish a firearm.
- 2) Authorizes DFW, in cooperation with the Department of Justice (DOJ), to promulgate regulations regarding the requirement in item 1, above, and allows DFW to provide additional information with a hunting license.

**FISCAL EFFECT:**

- 1) DFW estimates costs of approximately \$487,000 in fiscal year (FY) 2026-27 and \$471,000 in FY 2027-28 and ongoing for two new positions to implement this bill (Fish and Game Preservation Fund). If this bill is enacted, DFW notes it will need to ensure approximately 261,000 hunters receive information about firearm safety, field calls and emails from customers contacting its license and revenue branch, and track and review various and changing firearm laws to remain in compliance with this bill. DFW further notes this bill may result in increased litigation against the department.
- 2) DOJ reports minor and absorbable costs.

**COMMENTS:**

- 1) **Purpose.** According to the author:

[This bill] will help prevent senseless tragedies by providing crucial information about the safe storage of firearms, child access prevention laws, and other basic firearms laws to anyone purchasing a hunting license. Providing this important information to hunters, a group of people who are likely to own firearms, is commonsense step to

increase awareness of and compliance with the state's lifesaving gun safety laws.

- 2) **Background.** According to Pew Research, 38% of gun owners report that hunting is their primary reason for owning a gun. Roughly four in ten gun owners – including 30% of those with children under the age of 18 at home – say there is a gun that is both loaded and easily accessible to them all of the time when they are at home.

California's first hunter education law was enacted in 1954. Before receiving a hunting license from DFW, an individual must provide evidence that they have completed a hunter safety course. DFW offers two course options: (1) a traditional course that consists of a minimum of ten hours of classroom, homework, and field instruction or (2) a hybrid format that includes an online course followed by a four-hour class with a hunter education instructor. A hunter safety certificate is typically valid for the lifetime of a hunter.

In most cases, a person must obtain a firearm safety certificate (FSC) before purchasing or receiving a firearm. DOJ is responsible for developing and implementing the FSC program. A FSC is valid for five years. Hunters who only possess long guns (not hand guns) and have a valid hunting license are exempt from the FSC requirement.

DFW's license and revenue branch is responsible for the issuance of and revenue collection from approximately 400 types of licenses and permits related to recreational hunting and fishing, commercial fishing, and special permits. Over the last five years, DFW has granted, on average, 261,000 hunting license annually. Of the hunting licenses sold in 2023, around 44%, 56%, and 0.2% of licenses were purchased online, in-person, and over the phone, respectively. This bill requires DFW to modify its online platform, distribute materials to every DFW license sales office and applicable retail store, and mail out materials with every license.

**DFW Funding Challenges.** DFW's service-based budgeting (SBB) analysis for FY 2023-24 indicates that the department is funded for only one-third of its mandated program work. The SBB effort highlights the degree to which DFW operates with significant gaps between what is required to achieve its mandated mission and the level at which it is currently funded. In addition, the Budget Act of 2024 included a directive to the Department of Finance to eliminate open positions within state agencies to identify ongoing budget savings. As part of this effort, the administration is proposing to eliminate 190 vacant positions at DFW – a 13% net reduction.

DFW's core mission is to manage California's diverse fish, wildlife, and plant resources, and the habitats upon which they depend, for their ecological values and for their use and enjoyment by the public. This bill requires DFW to do something that is outside its core mission and places a new mandate on the department that it may not have sufficient resources to fulfill or that may divert resources from other programs.

**Support and Opposition.** The Brady Campaign and Consumer Protection Policy Center at the University of San Diego, School of Law write in support of this bill citing the importance of gun safety and the risks of guns to children.

Writing in opposition, the California Waterfowl Association questions the need for this bill, noting that hunter education, which includes instruction in firearm safety, is already required of anyone seeking a hunting license in the state. In addition, the association writes:

Our Association opposes this bill because it would create another unfunded mandate on the Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW), especially if DFW would need to modify its Automated License Data System. Most likely, the funding necessary to implement AB 1316's requirements would be taken from the Fish and Game Preservation Fund, which is already over-subscribed. The end result would be less funding available for wildlife conservation work, which includes enforcement of fish and game laws.

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