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SFA**BILL ANALYSIS**

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Senate Bill 281 (as reported without amendment)
Sponsor: Senator Dave Jaye
Committee: Hunting, Fishing and Forestry

Date Completed: 5-12-99

RATIONALE

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) operates numerous shooting ranges in State parks throughout Michigan where competitive as well as novice shooters are able to practice their firearm shooting skills. Currently, a person shooting a handgun on a DNR range may shoot only one round at a time. Apparently, semi-automatic/self-loader handguns, revolvers, and other firearms are designed to be used with multiple rounds. Some people believe that gun owners should be allowed to shoot their firearm with any number of rounds as designed on shooting ranges on land under the control of the DNR.

CONTENT

The bill would amend Part 5 (Department of Natural Resources) of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act to allow an individual to use a firearm loaded with any number of rounds not exceeding the manufacturer's original magazine capacity and to discharge without interruption any or all of the rounds in the firearm at a designated shooting range on land under the control of the Department of Natural Resources. For a recognized shooting competition, however, an individual could use a firearm loaded with any number of rounds not exceeding the number authorized under competition rules. Notwithstanding these provisions, an individual at a designated shooting range on land under the control of the DNR could not use a pistol loaded with more than 19 rounds or a long gun loaded with more than 20 rounds.

The bill further provides that a DNR employee acting in a official capacity could expel an individual from the shooting range on land under the DNR's control for a day, if the individual violated the bill, or failed to handle a firearm in a safe manner while he or she was present at the shooting range. The number of rounds loaded in a firearm, if in conformity with the bill, would not be a basis for expelling an individual from a shooting range.

Proposed MCL 324.504a

ARGUMENTS

(Please note: The arguments contained in this analysis originate from sources outside the Senate Fiscal Agency. The Senate Fiscal Agency neither supports nor opposes legislation.)

Supporting Argument

The bill would allow competitive as well as novice shooters to practice effectively and reasonably on DNR-controlled shooting ranges. Since shooting competitions often require shooting more than one round at a time, the bill would allow competitive shooters to practice shooting multiple rounds at public ranges. The bill further would provide beginners with the opportunity to practice shooting their semi-automatic firearms by allowing the firearms to go through their normal full cycle operational function. Through practice on shooting ranges, where DNR conservation officers or other skilled shooters are available for assistance, a beginner would be able to learn the techniques of what to do in situations when a round becomes jammed in a magazine.

Supporting Argument

Firing multiple rounds is necessary to verify that the operational sequence in the firearm is free of any interruption. Shooting multiple rounds as designated by the manufacturer's original magazine would allow a gun owner to loosen the gun's mechanical operation, correct any malfunctions, and evaluate the gun's overall performance.

Opposing Argument

According to the DNR, shooting multiple rounds on shooting ranges would have a negative impact on DNR programs regarding range safety. Firearm shooting experience on a range varies from highly skilled to beginner. Since there is a significant difference in pressure between firing the first and second round, a round can easily get jammed in the magazine. Beginners might be unaware that a round was left in the magazine, thereby endangering themselves, as well as others. In addition, most DNR shooting ranges are located near or in urban areas.

Multiple rounds tend to spray bullets out of the target zone, and could potentially harm people or property located outside of the shooting range. Therefore, the current one-round rule follows a necessary safety measure with concern for people both on and off the designated shooting range.

Legislative Analyst: N. Nagata

FISCAL IMPACT

The bill would have no impact on State or local government.

Fiscal Analyst: G. Cutler

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This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan Senate staff for use by the Senate in its deliberations and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.