



License revocations for unpaid child support

Permanent license revocation does not encourage payment of child support

HB 1218 & SB 5137



Problem: Permanent license revocation does not encourage payment of child support

State law requires the Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) to permanently revoke the fishing and hunting licenses of people who fish or hunt when their licenses are revoked for child-support violations. By eliminating the possibility that these parents can regain their fishing and hunting privileges, the law creates a disincentive for them to meet their child-support obligations in the future. The problem is the result of the interplay of two laws:

- One (RCW 74.20A.320) directs the department to suspend the hunting and fishing privileges of parents who do not comply with child-support orders.
- A second law (RCW 77.15.670) directs the department to permanently revoke the licenses of anyone who continues to hunt and fish after his or her privileges are suspended.

When it passed the first measure in 1997, the Legislature said its intent was to provide a strong incentive for people who owe child support to make required payments and promptly repay any unmet obligations.

However, Governor Chris Gregoire believes the second law actually can discourage people from repaying their child support debts because it permanently removes the possibility that they can regain their hunting and fishing privileges, even if they make all future child-support payments on time.

The Governor asked WDFW and the Department of Social and Health Services to develop legislation to remove the disincentive from state law.

Solution: Give parents the opportunity to regain their hunting and fishing licenses

WDFW, with the support of DSHS, proposes to amend the permanent license revocation law (RCW 77.15.670) to provide for temporary, not permanent, license revocation for parents who are convicted of fishing or hunting while their privileges are suspended for failure to pay child support.

The proposed legislation would suspend fishing and hunting privileges for four years for people who were convicted of first-degree violations and for two years for those convicted of second-degree violations.

Expected benefit: Increased incentive for parents with child-support obligations

The proposal is designed to provide an incentive for parents to fulfill their child-support obligations by providing them the opportunity to regain their fishing and/or hunting privileges if they repay any overdue child-support debts and remain in compliance in the future.

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