
OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 7194

AN ACT CONCERNING SELF-DEFENSE.

SUMMARY

This bill specifies that unlawfully discharging a firearm does not include intentionally discharging a firearm for lawful self-defense or defending another person.

Existing law allows the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) commissioner to adopt regulations and issue orders in the interest of public safety to prevent unreasonable conduct and abuses by hunters and to provide reasonable control for their actions and behaviors. The bill specifically prohibits the regulations or orders from prohibiting or being construed to prohibit intentionally discharging a firearm for lawful self-defense or defending another person.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2025

BACKGROUND

Unlawfully Discharging a Firearm

By law, a person unlawfully discharges a firearm when he or she intentionally, negligently, or carelessly discharges a firearm in a way likely to cause bodily injury or death to individuals or domestic animals, or the wanton destruction of property. Violators are guilty of a class C misdemeanor, punishable by up to three months imprisonment, up to a \$500 fine, or both.

Justified Use of Force to Defend Self or Others

By law, a person is generally justified in using reasonable physical force to defend himself, herself, or a third person from what he or she reasonably believes to be the use or imminent use of force, and may use the degree of force reasonably believed necessary. Generally, a person

can instead use deadly force if he or she reasonably believes that someone is using or about to use deadly physical force or inflict great bodily harm on them or someone else.

But despite these provisions, a person cannot use deadly force if he or she can avoid doing so with complete safety by (1) retreating, with certain exceptions (such as not having to do so at the person's home); (2) surrendering possession to property the other person claims to own; or (3) obeying a demand to not take an action he or she is not otherwise required to take.

The law provides certain other exceptions to the justified use of physical force, such as if the person provoked the attack with intent to cause injury or death to someone else (CGS § 53a-19).

Hunting Regulations

By law, the DEEP commissioner may adopt regulations and issue orders on various hunting-related prohibitions and restrictions. Among other things, these regulations and orders may prohibit (1) carrying loaded firearms and hunting within specified distances of buildings; (2) discharging firearms and other hunting devices within specified distances of buildings and, when within this distance, discharging them towards individuals, buildings, and livestock; and (3) damaging property, livestock, and agricultural crops.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Judiciary Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 41 Nay 0 (04/07/2025)