



# House of Representatives

**File No. 979**

General Assembly

January Session, 2025

**(Reprint of File No. 724)**

Substitute House Bill No. 7231  
As Amended by House Amendment  
Schedule "A"

Approved by the Legislative Commissioner  
May 29, 2025

## **AN ACT AUTHORIZING SUNDAY HUNTING ON PRIVATE LANDS.**

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

1 Section 1. Section 26-3 of the general statutes is repealed and the  
2 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October 1, 2025*):

3 The Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection shall  
4 enforce all of the laws relating to fish and wildlife of the state and shall  
5 possess all powers necessary to fulfill the duties prescribed by law with  
6 respect thereto and to bring actions in the proper courts of this state for  
7 the enforcement of such laws and the orders and regulations adopted  
8 and promulgated by said commissioner. Said commissioner shall have  
9 the supervision of hatcheries and retaining ponds and of the  
10 introduction, propagation, securing and distribution of such fish and  
11 wildlife as are adapted to the waters or lands of this state, and may  
12 designate, as closed to fishing, areas of inland waters to provide for  
13 spawning beds. The commissioner may take at any time or place, [other  
14 than Sundays,] using any method consistent with professional wildlife  
15 management principles, any fish, crustacean, bird or animal for

16 scientific and educational purposes, public health and safety,  
17 propagation and dissemination, or protection of natural or agricultural  
18 ecosystems. Such taking shall not include the use of a snare. In the case  
19 of an imminent threat to public health or public safety, notwithstanding  
20 any provision of the general statutes, the commissioner may take at any  
21 time or place, using any method consistent with professional wildlife  
22 management principles, any fish, crustacean, bird or animal. Said  
23 commissioner shall have jurisdiction of all matters relating to fish and  
24 wildlife on any land belonging to the state and the regulation of hunting,  
25 fishing and trapping and the use of the waters of any lake, pond or  
26 stream on such land. The commissioner shall not grant to any  
27 conservation officer, appointee or other person any special privileges  
28 with respect to hunting, fishing, trapping or the use of the waters of any  
29 lake, pond or stream on such land. Said commissioner may erect  
30 buildings upon any such land, subject to the permission of the  
31 authorities of any institution or commission controlling such land and  
32 the approval of the Commissioner of Administrative Services and the  
33 State Properties Review Board. The Commissioner of Energy and  
34 Environmental Protection may employ such special assistants as  
35 necessary. Said commissioner shall cooperate with the United States  
36 Fish and Wildlife Service and the fish and wildlife commissioners of  
37 other states. Said commissioner may acquire, by gift or lease and, with  
38 the approval of the Governor alone, by purchase, lands for the  
39 establishment of fish hatcheries or game preserves and fisheries or  
40 wildlife management areas. Said commissioner may, with the approval  
41 of the Attorney General, grant rights-of-way or other easements or  
42 leases for public purposes to the United States government, any  
43 subdivision of the state or any public utility within the state on or with  
44 respect to any lands under jurisdiction of said commissioner if said  
45 commissioner finds that such purposes are not in conflict with the  
46 public interest, provided any such public utility shall pay for any right-  
47 of-way, easement or lease so granted such compensation as said  
48 commissioner considers reasonable. Said commissioner shall have  
49 authority to establish the boundaries of any properties under the  
50 jurisdiction of said commissioner by agreement with owners of

51 adjoining property and may, with the approval of the Attorney General  
52 alone, exchange land with such property owners and execute deeds in  
53 the name of the state for the purpose of establishing such boundaries.  
54 The commissioner may provide for the importation of fish and wildlife,  
55 and provide for the protection, propagation and distribution of such  
56 imported or native fish and wildlife. The commissioner may locate, lay  
57 out, construct and maintain nurseries and rearing ponds where fish may  
58 be planted, propagated and reared and liberate and distribute such fish  
59 in the waters of this state. Said commissioner may acquire by gift,  
60 purchase, capture or otherwise any fish or wildlife for propagation,  
61 experimental or scientific purposes. Notwithstanding any provisions of  
62 the general statutes, said commissioner may destroy and dispose of any  
63 undesirable or diseased wildlife in the interest of wildlife management  
64 at any time or place and using any method consistent with professional  
65 wildlife management principles if said commissioner determines that  
66 such wildlife (1) aggressively invades, or is likely to be detrimental to,  
67 agricultural crops, native plants, livestock or wildlife, (2) is likely to be  
68 a carrier of insects, disease or parasites detrimental to such crops, plants  
69 or wildlife, (3) is likely to have a detrimental effect on natural or  
70 agricultural ecosystems, (4) is likely to be detrimental to endangered or  
71 threatened species or species of special concern, as listed in the  
72 regulations adopted by the commissioner under this chapter, or such  
73 species' essential habitats, or (5) causes severe property damage. The  
74 commissioner may enter into cooperative agreements with educational  
75 institutions and state, federal or other agencies to promote wildlife  
76 research and to train personnel for wildlife management, information,  
77 distribution and education projects, and may enter into cooperative  
78 agreements with federal agencies, municipalities, corporations,  
79 organized groups or landowners, associations and individuals for the  
80 development of fish or wildlife management and demonstration  
81 projects. The commissioner may allocate and expend for the protection,  
82 restoration, preservation and propagation of fish and wildlife all funds  
83 of the state collected, appropriated and acquired for the purpose.

84 Sec. 2. Section 26-73 of the general statutes is repealed and the

85 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October 1, 2025*):

86 Notwithstanding any provision of this chapter, Sunday shall be a  
87 closed season except for hunting [deer with bow and arrow] on private  
88 property and for the purpose of trapping under the provisions of this  
89 chapter. Sunday shall be a closed season for the hunting of migratory  
90 birds. The possession in the open air on Sunday of any implement for  
91 hunting [, except for bow and arrow,] shall be prima facie evidence of  
92 hunting. [in violation of the provisions of this section.] No provision of  
93 this section shall be construed so as to affect any provision of section 26-  
94 31, 26-48, 26-52 or 27-35. Artificially propagated birds designated by the  
95 commissioner may be shot on Sundays on licensed private shooting  
96 preserves subject to such regulations of the commissioner as may apply  
97 to such private shooting preserves, provided permission so to shoot has  
98 been obtained from the town or towns within which such licensed  
99 private shooting preserves are located. Any person who hunts [deer on  
100 Sunday with bow and arrow] on private property pursuant to this  
101 section shall: (1) Have the written permission of the private property  
102 owner where such hunting is conducted, and (2) carry such written  
103 permission upon his or her person during the hunting. No person shall  
104 hunt [with bow and arrow] on Sunday on private property pursuant to  
105 this section within forty yards of a blazed [hiking] trail open to the  
106 public, including, but not limited to, Connecticut blue blazed trails and  
107 federally designated and regulated trails.

108 Sec. 3. Subsection (a) of section 26-82 of the general statutes is  
109 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October*  
110 *1, 2025*):

111 (a) No person shall hunt, pursue, wound or kill any deer or sell or  
112 offer for sale or have in possession the flesh of any deer captured or  
113 killed in this state, or have in possession the flesh of any deer from any  
114 other state or country unless it is properly tagged as required by such  
115 state or country except as provided by the terms of this chapter or  
116 regulations adopted pursuant thereto, and except that any landowner  
117 or primary lessee of land owned by such landowner or the husband or

118 wife or any lineal descendant of such landowner or lessee or any  
119 designated agent of such landowner or lessee may kill deer with a  
120 shotgun, rifle or bow and arrow provided a damage permit has first  
121 been obtained from the commissioner and such person has not been  
122 convicted for any violation of this section, section 26-85, 26-86a, as  
123 amended by this act, 26-86b or 26-90 or subsection (b) of section 26-86a-  
124 2 of the regulations of Connecticut state agencies within three years  
125 preceding the date of application. Upon the receipt of an application, on  
126 forms provided by the commissioner and containing such information  
127 as said commissioner may require, from any landowner who has or  
128 whose primary lessee has an actual or potential gross annual income of  
129 twenty-five hundred dollars or more from the commercial cultivated  
130 production of grain, forage, fruit, vegetables, flowers, ornamental plants  
131 or Christmas trees and who is experiencing an actual or potential loss of  
132 income because of severe damage by deer, the commissioner shall issue  
133 not more than six damage permits without fee to such landowner or the  
134 primary lessee of such landowner, or the wife, husband, lineal  
135 descendant or designated agent of such landowner or lessee. The  
136 application shall be notarized and signed by all landowners or by the  
137 landowner or a lessee to whom a farmer tax exemption permit has been  
138 issued pursuant to subdivision (63) of section 12-412. Such damage  
139 permit shall be valid through October thirty-first of the year in which it  
140 is issued and may specify the hunting implement or shot size or both  
141 which shall be used to take such deer. The commissioner may at any  
142 time revoke such permit for violation of any provision of this section or  
143 for violation of any regulation pursuant thereto or upon the request of  
144 the applicant. Notwithstanding the provisions of section 26-85, the  
145 commissioner may issue a permit to any landowner or primary lessee  
146 of land owned by such landowner or the husband or wife or any lineal  
147 descendant of such landowner or lessee and to not more than three  
148 designated agents of such landowner or lessee to use a jacklight for the  
149 purpose of taking deer when it is shown, to the satisfaction of the  
150 commissioner, that such deer are causing damage which cannot be  
151 reduced during the daylight hours between sunrise and one-half hour  
152 after sunset on the land of such landowner. The commissioner may

153 require notification as specified on such permit prior to its use. Any deer  
154 killed in accordance with the provisions of this section shall be the  
155 property of the owner of the land upon which the same has been killed,  
156 but shall not be sold, bartered, traded or offered for sale, and the person  
157 who kills any such deer shall tag and report each deer killed, as  
158 provided in section 26-86b. Upon receipt of the report required by  
159 section 26-86b, the commissioner shall issue an additional damage  
160 permit to the person making such report. Any deer killed otherwise than  
161 under the conditions provided for in this chapter or regulations adopted  
162 pursuant thereto shall remain the property of the state and may be  
163 disposed of by the commissioner at the commissioner's discretion to any  
164 state institution or may be sold and the proceeds of such sale shall be  
165 remitted to the State Treasurer, who shall apply the same to the General  
166 Fund, and no person, except the commissioner, shall retail, sell or offer  
167 for sale the whole or any part of any such deer. No person shall be a  
168 designated agent of more than one landowner or primary lessee in any  
169 calendar year. No person shall make, set or use any trap, snare, salt lick,  
170 bait or other device for the purpose of taking, injuring or killing any  
171 deer, except that deer may be taken over an attractant in areas  
172 designated by the commissioner. For the purposes of this section, an  
173 attractant means any natural or artificial substance placed, exposed,  
174 deposited, distributed or scattered that is used to attract, entice or lure  
175 deer to a specific location including, but not limited to, salt, chemicals  
176 or minerals, including their residues or any natural or artificial food,  
177 hay, grain, fruit or nuts. The commissioner may authorize any  
178 municipality, homeowner association or nonprofit land-holding  
179 organization approved by the commissioner under the provisions of  
180 this section to take deer at any time [, other than Sundays,] or place using  
181 any method consistent with professional wildlife management  
182 principles when a severe nuisance or ecological damage can be  
183 demonstrated to the satisfaction of the commissioner. Any such  
184 municipality, homeowner association or nonprofit land-holding  
185 organization shall submit to the commissioner, for the commissioner's  
186 review and approval, a plan that describes the extent and degree of the  
187 nuisance or ecological damage and the proposed methods of taking.

188 Prior to the implementation of any such approved plan, the  
189 municipality, homeowner association or nonprofit land-holding  
190 organization shall provide notice of such plan to any abutting  
191 landowners of such place where the plan will be implemented. Such  
192 plan shall not authorize the use of a snare. No person shall hunt, pursue  
193 or kill deer being pursued by any dog, whether or not such dog is owned  
194 or controlled by such person, except that no person shall be guilty of a  
195 violation under this section when such a deer is struck by a motor  
196 vehicle operated by such person. No person shall use or allow any dog  
197 in such person's charge to hunt, pursue or kill deer. No permit shall be  
198 issued when in the opinion of the commissioner the public safety may  
199 be jeopardized.

200 Sec. 4. Subsection (a) of section 26-86a of the general statutes is  
201 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October*  
202 *1, 2025*):

203 (a) The commissioner shall establish by regulation adopted in  
204 accordance with the provisions of chapter 54 standards for deer  
205 management, and methods, regulated areas, bag limits, seasons and  
206 permit eligibility for hunting deer with bow and arrow, muzzleloader  
207 and shotgun, except that no such hunting shall be permitted on Sunday  
208 [by any means other than with bow and arrow on private property]  
209 unless it is conducted on private lands pursuant to section 26-73, as  
210 amended by this act. No person shall hunt, pursue, wound or kill deer  
211 with a firearm without first obtaining a deer permit from the  
212 commissioner in addition to the license required by section 26-27.  
213 Application for such permit shall be made on forms furnished by the  
214 commissioner and containing such information as he may require. Such  
215 permit shall be of a design prescribed by the commissioner, shall contain  
216 such information and conditions as the commissioner may require, and  
217 may be revoked for violation of any provision of this chapter or  
218 regulations adopted pursuant thereto. As used in this section,  
219 "muzzleloader" means a rifle or shotgun of at least forty-five caliber,  
220 incapable of firing a self-contained cartridge, which uses powder, a  
221 projectile, including, but not limited to, a standard round ball, mini-

222 balls, maxi-balls and Sabot bullets, and wadding loaded separately at  
223 the muzzle end, and "rifle" means a long gun the projectile of which is  
224 six millimeters or larger in diameter. The fee for a firearms permit shall  
225 be nineteen dollars for residents of the state and sixty-eight dollars for  
226 nonresidents, except that any nonresident who is an active full-time  
227 member of the armed forces, as defined in section 27-103, may purchase  
228 a firearms permit for the same fee as is charged a resident of the state.  
229 The commissioner shall issue, without fee, a private land deer permit to  
230 the owner of ten or more acres of private land and the husband or wife,  
231 parent, grandparent, sibling and any lineal descendant of such owner,  
232 provided no such owner, husband or wife, parent, grandparent, sibling  
233 or lineal descendant shall be issued more than one such permit per  
234 season. Such permit shall allow the use of a rifle, shotgun, muzzleloader  
235 or bow and arrow on such land from November first to December thirty-  
236 first, inclusive. Deer may be so hunted at such times and in such areas  
237 of such state-owned land as are designated by the Commissioner of  
238 Energy and Environmental Protection and on privately owned land  
239 with the signed consent of the landowner, on forms furnished by the  
240 department, and such signed consent shall be carried by any person  
241 when so hunting on private land. The owner of ten acres or more of  
242 private land may allow the use of a rifle to hunt deer on such land  
243 during the shotgun season. The commissioner shall determine, by  
244 regulation, the number of consent forms issued for any regulated area  
245 established by said commissioner. The commissioner shall provide for  
246 a fair and equitable random method for the selection of successful  
247 applicants who may obtain shotgun and muzzleloader permits for  
248 hunting deer on state lands. Any person whose name appears on more  
249 than one application for a shotgun permit or more than one application  
250 for a muzzleloader permit shall be disqualified from the selection  
251 process for such permit. No person shall hunt, pursue, wound or kill  
252 deer with a bow and arrow without first obtaining a bow and arrow  
253 permit pursuant to section 26-86c. "Bow and arrow", as used in this  
254 section and in section 26-86c, means a bow with a draw weight of not  
255 less than forty pounds. The arrowhead shall have two or more blades  
256 and may not be less than seven-eighths of an inch at the widest point.

257 No person shall carry firearms of any kind while hunting with a bow  
 258 and arrow under this section and section 26-86c.

259 Sec. 5. Subsection (b) of section 26-91 of the general statutes is  
 260 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October*  
 261 *1, 2025*):

262 (b) The Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection may  
 263 authorize any municipality, homeowner association or nonprofit land-  
 264 holding organization approved by the commissioner under the  
 265 provisions of this section to take resident Canada geese at any time [,  
 266 other than Sundays,] or place using any method consistent with  
 267 professional wildlife management principles. Any such municipality,  
 268 homeowner association or nonprofit land-holding organization shall  
 269 submit to the commissioner, for the commissioner's review and  
 270 approval, a plan that describes the extent and degree of the nuisance or  
 271 ecological damage and the proposed method of taking. Such plan shall  
 272 include prohibitions against feeding of such geese and requirements  
 273 that landscaping in the area is managed in a way to be less hospitable to  
 274 geese, utilizing native plantings. Prior to the implementation of such  
 275 plan, the municipality, homeowner association or nonprofit land-  
 276 holding organization shall provide notice of such plan to abutting  
 277 landowners of such place where the plan will be implemented. Such  
 278 plan shall not authorize the use of a snare.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:

Section 1	<i>October 1, 2025</i>	26-3
Sec. 2	<i>October 1, 2025</i>	26-73
Sec. 3	<i>October 1, 2025</i>	26-82(a)
Sec. 4	<i>October 1, 2025</i>	26-86a(a)
Sec. 5	<i>October 1, 2025</i>	26-91(b)

*The following Fiscal Impact Statement and Bill Analysis are prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and do not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose. In general, fiscal impacts are based upon a variety of informational sources, including the analyst's professional knowledge. Whenever applicable, agency data is consulted as part of the analysis, however final products do not necessarily reflect an assessment from any specific department.*

## **OFA Fiscal Note**

### **State Impact:**

Agency Affected	Fund-Effect	FY 26 \$	FY 27 \$
Judicial Dept. (Probation)	GF - Potential Savings	Minimal	Minimal
Resources of the General Fund	GF - Potential Revenue Loss	Minimal	Minimal

Note: GF=General Fund

**Municipal Impact:** None

### **Explanation**

The bill allows for Sunday hunting and trapping in certain circumstances which results in a potential savings to the Judicial Department for probation and a potential revenue loss to the General Fund from fines.<sup>1</sup> On average, the marginal cost for supervision in the community is less than \$600<sup>2</sup> each year for adults and \$450 each year for juveniles.

The bill also permits the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) to make several changes related to expanded hunting on Sunday, which is not anticipated to result in a fiscal impact as DEEP has the staff and expertise necessary to implement the changes.

House "A" strikes the underlying bill and its associated fiscal impact and replaces it with the fiscal impact described above.

<sup>1</sup> From FY 20 - FY 24, 200 charges were recorded and \$2,075 in associated revenue was collected under CGS § 26-91, 26-86a, 26-82, and 26-73.

<sup>2</sup> Probation marginal cost is based on services provided by private providers and only includes costs that increase with each additional participant.

***The Out Years***

The annualized ongoing fiscal impact identified above would continue into the future subject to inflation.

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**OLR Bill Analysis****sHB 7231 (as amended by House "A")\******AN ACT CONCERNING SUNDAY HUNTING ON PRIVATE LANDS OF TEN ACRES OR MORE.*****SUMMARY**

This bill expands the ability to hunt on Sundays. Current law generally only allows the following on Sundays: deer hunting with bow and arrow on private property with the property owner's permission, shooting birds at private shooting preserves, and trapping.

The bill generally allows Sunday hunting on private land with any approved hunting implements, except hunting migratory birds on Sunday remains prohibited, as it is under current law (§ 2). The bill requires a hunter to get and carry written permission from the private property owner to hunt there on Sunday. But it prohibits Sunday hunting within 40 yards of a blazed trail that is open to the public, including Connecticut blue blazed trails and federally designated and regulated trails. Relatedly, the bill effectively requires the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) commissioner to develop regulations on hunting deer on private land on Sundays (§ 4).

The bill also expands current law in the following ways:

1. allows the DEEP commissioner to take (e.g., hunt or kill) wildlife on Sundays consistent with wildlife management principles (§ 1);
2. allows DEEP to authorize municipalities, homeowner associations, and nonprofit land-holding organizations to take deer on Sundays consistent with wildlife management principles if they show deer are a severe nuisance or are causing ecological damage, to the DEEP commissioner's satisfaction in a plan they

file with DEEP (§ 3); and

3. allows the DEEP commissioner to authorize municipalities, homeowner associations, and nonprofit land-holding organizations to take resident Canadian geese on Sundays, consistent with wildlife management principles and a plan they file with DEEP (§ 5).

By law, generally no one can hunt in Connecticut without first getting the appropriate licenses and permits from DEEP. Hunters must also comply with the relevant hunting regulations, which address things like the allowed hunting season, reporting requirements, and bag limits.

Under the bill, violations of the state's hunting laws carry a range of penalties depending on the specific statute violated. For example, illegally hunting on Sundays in violation of § 2 of the bill is a class D misdemeanor (subject to a fine of up to \$250, up to 30 days in prison, or both) (CGS § 26-81). And a person who takes deer without a permit in violation of § 4 of the bill is subject to a fine of between \$200 and \$500, up to 30 days in prison, or both for a first violation, and a fine between \$200 and \$1,000, up to one year of prison, or both for a subsequent violation (CGS § 26-86a(b)).

\*House Amendment "A" replaces the underlying bill with similar provisions but (1) removes the limitation allowing Sunday hunting only on private lands of at least 10 acres and (2) prohibits Sunday hunting within 40 yards of certain public trails. It also makes minor and technical changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2025

## COMMITTEE ACTION

Environment Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 30      Nay 3      (03/28/2025)