

Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee

Griffin Roberge 271-3042

HB 342, relative to the taking of game by certain lever-action firearms and relative to the number of rounds permitted in a firearm used to take deer.

Hearing Date: March 22, 2021.

Time Opened: 1:48 p.m.

Time Closed: 1:56 p.m.

Members of the Committee Present: Senators Avard, Giuda, Gray, Watters and Perkins Kwoka.

Members of the Committee Absent: None.

Bill Analysis: This bill allows the taking of game with certain lever-action firearms. The bill also specifies that a firearm used to take deer shall not be loaded with more than 6 rounds of ammunition.

Sponsors:

Rep. Spillane

Rep. Pearl

Rep. Roy

Rep. Verville

Rep. Love

Who supports the bill: Representative John Burt, Hillsborough - District 39; Ronald Garnett; Joe Hannon, Gun Owners of New Hampshire; Representative Timothy Lang, Belknap - District 4; Jeanine Notter, Hillsborough - District 21; Paul Sanderson, NH Fish and Game Department; Representative James Spillane, Rockingham - District 2.

Who opposes the bill: Richard DeMark; Lucinda Hope; Ruth Larson; Robin Vogt.

Who is neutral on the bill: None.

Summary of testimony presented in support:

Representative James Spillane
Rockingham – District 2

- HB 342 was recommended “ought to pass with amendment” by the House Fish and Game and Marine Resources Committee by a vote of 20-0 and was placed on the House consent calendar. The full House supported by committee’s recommendation by a voice vote.
- There are areas in NH where individuals can hunt with only a shotgun or a pistol as listed in RSA 208:3, 3-a, 3-b, and 3-c. There is no dispute that a rifle is more accurate than a pistol or shotgun – a rifle allows a hunter to better aim their shot and avoid stray bullets. Section 1 would allow for the use of a lever-action carbine chambered in .357, .44 Magnum, or a .45 Colt in any area where hunting is restricted to a handgun or pistol. These three calibers are already permitted to use in pistols in the areas listed in RSA 208:3, 3-1, 3-b, and 3-c.
- Sections 2 and 3 would increase the number of cartridges and rounds in all firearms used for hunting. Current statute has a five cartridge/round limit. HB 342 would increase that number to six. These changes would create consistency in state statute and align with the proposed changes in HB 192 (2021).

- Senator Watters summarized that HB 342 is essentially updating state statute to keep up with modern firearms.
 - Representative Spillane said Senator Watters was correct.

Representative Timothy Lang

Belknap – District 4

- Shooting a lever-action carbine is safer to use for taking an animal in compact areas than a pistol, making HB 342 a safety bill. A lever-action carbine's ballistic capabilities are also consistent with currently allowed firearms.
- HB 342's Sections 2 and 3 align with changes in HB 192 and address an enforcement issue for the NH Fish and Game Department (NHFG).

Joe Hannon

Vice President, Gun Owners of New Hampshire

- Reiterated Representative Spillane and Representative Lang's testimony.

Summary of testimony presented in opposition: None.

Neutral Information Presented: None.

GJR

Date Hearing Report completed: March 22, 2021.