House of Representatives

General Assembly

File No. 752

January Session, 2025

Substitute House Bill No. 7194

House of Representatives, April 23, 2025

The Committee on Judiciary reported through REP. STAFSTROM of the 129th Dist., Chairperson of the Committee on the part of the House, that the substitute bill ought to pass.

AN ACT CONCERNING SELF-DEFENSE.

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

Section 1. Section 53-203 of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October 1, 2025*):

(a) Any person who intentionally, negligently or carelessly discharges any firearm in such a manner as to be likely to cause bodily injury or death to persons or domestic animals, or the wanton destruction of property, shall be guilty of a class C misdemeanor.

(b) The provisions of subsection (a) of this section shall not be construed to prohibit the intentional discharge of a firearm for the purpose of lawful self-defense or lawful defense of another person.

Sec. 2. Section 26-66 of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective October 1, 2025*):

The commissioner may adopt regulations in accordance with the provisions of chapter 54 governing the taking of wildlife, provided any

regulations concerning the taking of migratory game birds shall be consistent with section 26-91. The regulations may: (1) Establish the open and closed seasons, which may be modified by decreasing or increasing the number of days for any specific species, (2) establish hours, days or periods during the open season when hunting shall not be permitted for specific species, (3) establish legal hours, (4) prescribe the legal methods, including type, kind, gauge and caliber of weapons and ammunition, including long bow, (5) prescribe the sex of wildlife that may be taken on a state-wide or local area basis, (6) establish the daily bag limit and the season bag limit, (7) establish the maximum number of persons that may hunt on designated areas during any twenty-four-hour period, (8) require that a permit be obtained from the landowner or such landowner's agent, or the commissioner or such commissioner's agent, to enter upon designated premises or areas for the purpose of hunting, and further require that such permit be returned within a specified time to the issuing authority with an accurate report of all wildlife taken under such permit, the time spent on the premises or area and any other data required by the commissioner for management purposes, (9) establish areas that shall be restricted for designated periods for hunting only with long bow or other specified weapons, (10) establish areas that shall be restricted for designated periods for hunting exclusively by persons with physical disabilities, (11) establish requirements and procedures for tagging and reporting birds or animals taken by hunting or trapping**[**;**]** and (12) provided no regulation or order prohibits or may be construed to prohibit the intentional discharge of a firearm for the purpose of lawful self-defense or lawful defense of another person, in the interest of public safety and for the purpose of preventing unreasonable conduct and abuses by hunters, and to provide reasonable control of the actions and behavior of such persons, said commissioner may issue regulations and orders to **[**(12)**]** (A) prohibit the carrying of loaded firearms and hunting within specified distances of buildings, **[**(13)**]** (B) prohibit the discharge of firearms and other hunting devices within specified distances of buildings and, when within specified distances, the discharge of such firearms and devices toward persons, buildings and livestock, **[**(14)**]** (C)

prohibit hunting while on any road adjacent to any state park, state forest, premises used for the breeding, rearing or holding in captivity of wildlife or premises used for zoological purposes, **[**(15)**]** (D) establish minimum distances between fixed positions, floating and drift blinds for waterfowl hunting, **[**(16)**]** (E) prohibit crossing over lawns and lands under cultivation, **[**(17)**]** (F) prohibit damage to property, livestock and agricultural crops, **[**(18)**]** (G) prohibit, during specified periods on designated areas, the training, exercising and running of dogs under control or uncontrolled, **[**(19)**]** (H) prohibit the operation and parking of vehicles on designated portions of public and private roads, parking areas, lanes, passageways, rights-of-way, fields and lots, **[**(20)**]** (I) prohibit the discarding of bottles, glass, cans, paper, junk, litter and trash, **[**(21)**]** (J) control the launching, anchoring, mooring, storage and abandonment of boats, trailers and related equipment on properties under the control of the commissioner, **[**(22)**]** (K) specify **[**(A)**]** (i) the persons who shall wear fluorescent orange clothing, **[**(B)**]** (ii) the time periods during which such clothing shall be worn, and **[**(C)**]** (iii) the types and amounts of such clothing which shall be worn, on and after January 1, 1989, when hunting.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	*October 1, 2025*	53-203
Sec. 2	*October 1, 2025*	26-66

JUD *Joint Favorable Subst.*

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, which excludes the intentional discharge of a firearm in self-defense or the defense of others from a class C misdemeanor for unlawfully discharging a firearm, results in a potential savings to the Judicial Department for probation and a potential revenue loss to the General Fund from fines.[1] On average, the marginal cost for supervision in the community is less than $600[2] each year for adults and $450 each year for juveniles.

The Out Years

The annualized ongoing fiscal impact identified above would continue into the future subject to inflation and the actual number of violations.

[1] In FY 24, 331 charges were recorded and $1,850 in associated revenue was collected under CGS § 53-203.

[2] Probation marginal cost is based on services provided by private providers and only includes costs that increase with each additional participant.

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)