

Shooters Committee on Political Education

Position Paper



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Establish the minimum age and circumstances for juveniles to possess rifles, shotguns and air guns.

PURPOSE

This proposal would lower the age at which individuals are allowed to use rifles, shotguns and air guns under supervised conditions from twelve to ten. This would bring New York in line with the rest of the nation and allow New York residents between the ages of ten and twelve to participate in national competitive programs designed for this age group.

POSITION

SCOPE fully supports these legislative proposals. Sound safety training is the single greatest step that we can take to further firearms safety. Responsible firearms use is deeply ingrained in our national heritage. With firearms present in half of American homes, they are a fact of everyday life.

Providing the means and environment for safely handling and using them ensures the safety of everyone. It allows young shooters to develop the skills and safe habits at an early age while participating in nationally accepted programs and prior to entering the fields as hunters. The proposed age level is consistent with the practice in virtually all other states.

Allow individuals to receive training in the safe handling and use of rifles and shotguns and develop their skills prior to becoming hunters.

Individuals can hunt small game with firearms at twelve years of age and big game at fourteen. The DEC's current five-year deer management plan calls for the big game age to be lowered to twelve. These ages are consistent with current practice in virtually all other states, including those bordering New York.

It makes a great deal of sense that individuals who are going to be legally hunting be given the training and allowed to develop the firearms handling skills required for safe hunting before they go afield. The required hunter safety training is only enhanced by the ingrained firearms handling skills developed through practice on the range.

Enable these individuals to participate in national competitive shooting programs developed for this age group.

The training of our youth in the safe and responsible handling of firearms and their participation in both local and national sports shooting programs does much to both build character and preserve our heritage. Programs are conducted by such organizations as the Boy Scouts, 4H, the American Legion, and the Scholastic Clay Target Program.