



In Photo: State Reps. Dave Wilson, Bobby Outten, and Jeff Spiegelman were among the lawmakers present for Sunday's signing of House Bill 156 at Owens Station.

NEWS:

New Laws Give Delaware Deer Hunters Expanded Options

AUGUST 17, 2018 – Delaware deer hunters will have some new options this year. On Sunday, Gov. John Carney signed into law [House Bill 156](#) (as amended) at Owens Station near Greenwood.

The new law will allow deer hunters to use rifles chambered for handgun ammunition. The statute contains restrictions on the caliber and the type of ammo that can be used, limiting the effective range of the bullets.

Under the law, the rifles must hold no more than three rounds and can only be used during deer seasons in which shotguns or handguns can be employed.

"Being able to hunt and manage deer with pistol-caliber rifles has been shown in other states to be a safe, ethical, and novel experience for sportsmen," said State Rep. Jeff

Spiegelman, R-Clayton, one of the prime sponsors of the bill. "I'm happy that my fellow co-chair of the Delaware Sportsmen's Caucus (State Sen. Bruce Ennis) and I were able ... to create an exciting new dimension to our honored outdoor heritage."

Rep. Spiegelman added that he plans to seek another deer hunting option in the upcoming 150th General Assembly, revisiting legislation to allow the use of [airbows](#). The relatively new devices are perhaps best described as a hybrid of an air rifle and a crossbow with a range similar to that of a shotgun.

[House Bill 157](#) -- which was co-sponsored by State Reps. Tim Dukes, R-Laurel and Dave Wilson, R-Cedar Creek Hundred -- would have permitted hunters to use airbows during any deer season allowing shotguns. The measure cleared committee in May 2017, languishing for more than a year on the House Ready List without ever being considered by the chamber.

Several states have already legalized airbows during their firearms deer seasons. Advocates say they would provide a quiet, accurate hunting weapon that would be perfect for Delaware's newly expanded Sunday hunting opportunities.

Enacted last month, [Senate Bill 198](#) will allow Sunday hunting for deer on private land and designated public land during the upcoming fall and winter. A 2016 law had already allowed for limited Sunday hunting on five specific days. The new statute adds 18 additional Sundays -- 23 in all -- to the 2018-19 deer hunting seasons.

State Reps. Ruth Briggs King, R-Georgetown; Danny Short, R-Seafood; and Lyndon Yearick, R-Dover South were among the co-sponsors of the bipartisan legislation. The change was an acknowledgement of the need to better manage Delaware's growing deer population with a dwindling number of hunters.