

LOCAL LAW TO BE ENACTED BY  
THE ERIE COUNTY LEGISLATURE  
IN THE COUNTY OF ERIE  
LOCAL LAW INTRO. – NO. 3-1 - 2026  
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**A Local Law authorizing twelve (12) and thirteen (13) year old licensed hunters to hunt deer with a firearm or crossbow during hunting season with the supervision of a licensed adult**

**SECTION 1. Legislative Intent**

Historically, twelve (12) and thirteen (13) year old residents of New York State have only been able to hunt deer with a bow, or small game with appropriate firearms. This rule has left New York as the only state to prohibit twelve (12) and thirteen (13) year old hunters from using firearms to hunt deer.

The 2021 New York State Budget included legislation allowing residents aged twelve (12) and thirteen (13) to hunt deer with a firearm or crossbow under the supervision of an experienced adult hunter, provided the county in which they are hunting has opted into the program pursuant to Environmental Conservation Law 11-0935. This program has been extended through 2028.

Environmental Conservation Law 11-0935 provides for counties to allow young residents, aged twelve (12) and thirteen (13) years old, the opportunity to safely learn to hunt deer with firearms under adult supervision. It is the intent of this law to permit twelve (12) and thirteen (13) year old residents to hunt deer with firearms and crossbows, by opting into New York's existing program pursuant to Environmental Conservation Law 11-0935. It does not expand youth access to firearms; it simply increases the opportunity to hunt bigger game.

Hunting is a valued tradition for many families. Providing this opportunity will allow experienced adult hunters to introduce the value of hunting to the next generation. Teaching young people safe, responsible, and ethical hunting practices will ensure a rewarding experience for the youth while contributing to important deer management population control practices.

A 2021 version of this law was passed by this Honorable Body and vetoed by County Executive Poloncarz. Executive Poloncarz cited the “many unfortunate firearm hunting accidents across the state and county, especially those involving youth hunters” as the reason for the law’s veto. The first five-year period of the pilot program has ended, and the Department of Environmental Conservation has issued a report on hunting incidents across New York State. According to the report, only two eligible counties failed to enter into the pilot program, Erie County and Rockland County. During the initial five-year period of the pilot program, an average of 12,650 youths aged 12-13 participated in the youth hunting program each year. Over this time, the DEC documented no hunting-related shooting incidents, violations, or hunting license revocations involving 12- and 13-year-old deer hunters. Furthermore, the program has been deemed so successful that the DEC recommends making it permanent.

## **SECTION 2. Program Authorization**

Pursuant to Environmental Conservation Law 11-0935, Erie County elects to participate in the temporary program allowing young hunters, ages twelve (12) and thirteen (13), to hunt deer with a firearm, to include rifles, shotguns, and muzzle loaded firearms or crossbow through December 31, 2028.

## **SECTION 3. State Requirements to Adhere Once Authorized**

Per New York State requirements twelve (12) and thirteen (13) year old licensed hunters shall be allowed to hunt deer with the following requirements:

- i. Twelve (12) and thirteen (13) year old licensed hunters shall be under the supervision of a licensed adult hunter, aged 21 years or older, with a rifle, shotgun, or muzzle loading firearm in areas where, and during the hunting season in which, such firearms may be used; and
- ii. Twelve (12) and thirteen (13) year old licensed hunters shall be allowed to hunt deer under the supervision of a licensed adult hunter, aged 21 years or older, with a crossbow during the times when other hunters may use crossbows; and
- iii. Supervision of a licensed adult hunter, aged twenty-one (21) years or older, with at least three (3) years of experience who exercises dominion and control over the youth hunter at all times is required; and
- iv. All licensed twelve (12) and thirteen (13) year old hunters as well as their adult supervisors shall be required to wear fluorescent orange or pink clothing while engaged in hunting to an extent and covering so designated pursuant to the law, rules, and regulations promulgated by the State of New York; and
- v. All licensed twelve (12) and thirteen (13) year old hunters shall remain at ground level while hunting deer with a crossbow, rifle, shotgun, or muzzleloader; and
- vi. Notwithstanding any State or Federal Law to the contrary, this local law shall not authorize the hunting of bear by twelve (12) and thirteen (13) year old hunters with a firearm or crossbow.

## **SECTION 4. Filing Requirements**

A copy of this Local Law shall be sent to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and the New York State Department of State.

## **SECTION 5. Effective Date**

This local law shall take effect immediately upon filing with the Secretary of State.

## **SECTION 5. Severability**

If any clause, sentence, paragraph, subdivision, section or part of this Local Law or the application thereof, to any person, individual, corporation, firm, partnership, entity or circumstance, shall be adjudged by any court of competent jurisdiction to be invalid or unconstitutional such order of judgment shall not affect, impair, or invalidate the remainder thereof, but shall be confined in its operation to the clause, sentence, paragraph, subdivision, section or part of this Local Law or in its application to the person, individual, corporation, firm, partnership, entity, or circumstance directly involved in the controversy in which such judgment or order shall be rendered.

**Sponsors:** Legislator Todaro, Legislator Mills, Legislator Greene, Legislator Lorigo