

Environment Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: SB-241

Title: AN ACT CONCERNING BOATING SAFETY.

Vote Date: 3/28/2022

Vote Action: JOINT FAVORABLE Substitute

PH Date: 3/7/2022

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Rep. John-Michael Parker, 101st Dist.
Rep Aimee Berger-Girvalo, 111st Dist.

Rep. Christine Palm, 36th Dist.

REASONS FOR BILL:

To (1) require all vessels upon the waters of the state to contain labels that enable law enforcement to readily identify the owner of such vessel, (2) facilitate existing procedures for enforcement of boating laws, and (3) provide incentives, funding and staff for the increased and sustained enforcement of the boating safety laws of the state on the lakes, rivers and other waters of the state.

JOINT FAVORABLE SUBSTITUTE:

LCO 3850 Remove former section that increased the minimum property damage reporting threshold involving boating accidents and removed former section 1 requiring labels/information on all vessels

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Katie S. Dykes, Commissioner, DEEP

This bill proposes to make six changes to boating law. Sections 1-4 were raised at the request of DEEP. Section 1 would require all vessels using state waters to affix owner contact information. Section 2 would clarify that municipalities may not adopt boating ordinances that duplicate state law or regulation. Section 3 would correct a simple drafting oversight. Section 4 would amend the current boating accident law to raise the vessel damage reporting threshold from five hundred dollars to two thousand dollars to be consistent with federal regulation. Section 5 would direct DEEP to establish a schedule of fees that would be returned to a lake authority based on infractions, whether issued by lake authorities or DEEP Environmental police. The effect of this provision would be to redirect general funds to lake authorities. Section 6 proposes to direct five million dollars to DEEP for the purpose

of providing enhanced enforcement of boating laws and regulations through increased Environmental Conservation Police staff.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Robert LaFrance, Director of Policy, Audubon Connecticut,

The Audubon is extremely supportive of SB 241. The Audubon staff need help to protect piping plover nesting areas. The number of full time EnCon officers is simply not sufficient to keep up with the expanding need for their services.

Tracy Everson, Minority Leader, Branford Representative Town Meeting

SB 240 is a good first step. Jet skis are a serious concern. Constituents that I've worked with have had a difficult time trying to put in place No Wake Zones in the marsh area of the Branford River.

Lee Garber Resident of Branford

I support this bill as part of the remedy to improve boating safety, protect the environment and wildlife, and preserve the area for all to enjoy safely.

Toby Moffett, Resident of Branford

Support SB 240 because our group has major concerns on safety on the water. Jet skis are speeding, going faster than even existing statutes permit. The local Police do not have the manpower or funds to address the jet ski problems. Funding could provide for the purchase of patrol boats as well as for recruiting and training law enforcement officers.

Pete Raymond, President, Branford Land Trust

The Branford Land Trust is in support of SB 240 and focusing on boating safely and ethically around the sensitive habitats of Branford.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Jess Zaccagnino, Policy Counsel of the ACLU of Connecticut

ACLU opposes Section 6 of SB 241 that appropriates five million dollars to fund additional environmental conservation police officers.

Reported by: Judith Ganswindt

Date: April 4, 2022