

Madam Chair or Mr. Chairman, and members of the committee. My name is Leland Brandes, formerly of South Windsor, CT, and I want to speak about Bill number 272, AN ACT CONCERNING DRUNK BOATING. To extend the period of time that a blood alcohol test for boating under the influence may be administered if expert testimony establishes the reliability of such test.

For the record, I completely support this bill.

On July 8, 2007, at approximately 3:40 PM, my wife Susan, and I, along with 2 friends, were in our sailboat, returning from a day's outing on Long Island Sound. Our destination was the Old Saybrook boat ramp on the Connecticut River.

We were sailing up the river toward the railroad bridge that spans the Connecticut River. The bridge was in the lowered position due to railroad traffic. We, along with other boaters, were waiting for the bridge to be raised.

We saw a speedboat going in large circles at a high rate of speed. The speedboat came so close to us that he nearly swamped us, as he splashed us with his wake.

I was about to call the police when he came around again. There was no way to get out of his way.

He hit us at 3:50PM at a speed of about 45 mph causing massive injuries and bloodshed. My wife Susan was on the bow of our boat and was killed instantly. His boat went over our starboard side, snapping the mast, and injuring a passenger (broken clavicle and ribs). I thought I saw my wife in the water and dived in to assist her. As I reached for her, what I grabbed was the speedboaters spinning propeller. The propeller severed my right hand between my ring finger and middle finger halfway up to my elbow. Almost a complete amputation. Ultimately my ring finger was amputated. I have very little use of my right hand today.

The boater it turns out was not even in his boat, having been thrown out a while earlier. When he was fished out of the water, he was taken to the dock, where he was held until the police could arrive at the dock.

The police, and others, meantime were recovering all of us in the water, trying to stop the runaway boat and render medical assistance.

When the case came to trial, The blood alcohol test which had been administered, was thrown out due to the timing of the test. Two hours and ten minutes after.

In my opinion I am glad that the police and other rescuers were saving my life and tending to the others rather than worrying about the clock.

Bill 272 should be passed immediately, so that in the future, tragedies like this might be avoided.

Drinking and boating just don't mix!

Leland Brandes