

For Members of the Environment Committee - re HB 6541

The beginning of my boating education was a 12 week course in 1968. Upon completion, in a classroom setting, I felt cautious but confident to navigate the local waters (Norwalk to Bridgeport). Last year because I wanted my PWC certification, I took the condensed version (2 days) Boating Safety Course, in a classroom setting, just to make sure I still am current in "Boating Safety" in the state of Connecticut. Upon completion I felt that I was completely safe while tied to the dock or mooring but venturing out into open waters, I felt I had very little if any qualifications and would be placing myself in danger.

The State of Connecticut now wants to place the Boating Education Course, resulting in a "Safe Boating Certificate" in an "On-Line Training Computer Base format. Having experienced the above two versions of Basic Boating, the student needs the input and personal experiences of the instructors as well as the questioning, use of basic instruments (compass, charts, lines and radio) and exchange between students, to develop confidence. This will not happen sitting in front of a computer screen looking at illustrations, pictures and the written word.

Connecticut is a mixture of open sea, Long Island Sound, lakes and rivers with and without rocky coastlines. If the State does not want to do classroom teaching, fine, but computer based teaching will not qualify a person to navigate this mixture of waters. There are several volunteer organizations who have been teaching in classroom setting who are excellent and graduate confident Basic Boaters with their "Safe Boating Certificate". There is no reason for the State to re-invent the course on line when a pool of qualified organizations and instructors already exists.

Please re-think your push for Distance Learning, it isn't necessary and will do more harm than good.

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