

**Environment Committee
Room 3200, Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106
Phone: 860-240-0440**

Co-chairs are: Senator Edward Meyer and Representative Linda M. Gentile.

Ref: H.B. No. 6541 (RAISED) ENVIRONMENT . 'AN ACT CONCERNING ON-LINE EDUCATION OPTIONS FOR BOATING AND HUNTING SAFETY'

Senator Meyer and Representative Gentile, Thank you for the opportunity to comment on H.B. 6541.

The United States Power Squadrons, its District Organization, and our localsquadrons are supportive of the DEEP initiative to make its boating education available on-line to beginning boaters in Connecticut. We feel it will prove to be an efficient approach to this vital education of over 7,000 beginning boaters every year.

One of the primary missions of the United States Power Squadrons is boating education. Our organization has long recognized Connecticut as a leader among those few states requiring basic boating education in order to operate power boats in local waters. We are continually reminded of the lack of this basic education in other states that do not have similar requirements when we see the annual boating accident and fatality statistics.

Our District 1 represents over 1100 experiencedboaters in the western portion of Connecticut, specifically representing squadrons in Hartford, Manchester, Meriden, Middletown, Milford, New Britain, New Haven, New London, Norwich, Saybrook, and Waterbury. We also represent squadrons in Springfield, MA and Westerly, RI. We are justly proud this year as we approach the 100th anniversary of the United States Power Squadrons in 2014 that our own New Haven Squadron is the only squadron in the United States to also reach its 100th anniversary as a continuously operating squadron. Our District 2 represents the eastern portion of Connecticut including Squadrons in Darien, Greenwich, Lake Candlewood, Norwalk, and Stamford.

Each year our two Districts train many hundreds of beginning boaters to meet the requirements of the CT-DEEP so that they may qualify for the "Certificate of Personal Watercraft Operation". We also teach advanced courses including Seamanship, Piloting, Advanced Piloting, Navigation, Weather, Engine Maintenance, and Marine Electrical Systems.

As Connecticut moves to "on-line" training we will stand by to support CT-DEEP in offering classes for those students that do not have access to computers, are not computer literate, or who just prefer to have an in-classroom experience. Additionally, we will be available to offer proctored exams to students taking the on-line course if called upon.

In closing, we support the passage of **H.B. No. 6541** as it is written and look forward to working with the CT-DEEP as they phase in the new teaching methods. If we can be of any further service, please do not hesitate to call on us.

Sincerely,

Cliff McKibbin, Education Officer, Hartford Power Squadron

Treasurer, District 1, United States Power Squadron