

Dear Senator Edward Meyer, Rep. Linda Gentile and the Environmental Committee:

RE: HR Bill #6541

I understand that the Environmental Committee is considering a change in the law to allow for a short on-line computer course to take the place of classroom-based safe boating courses. While on the surface this may seem like a great way to engage more boaters with safe boating education with the power of the internet, I believe that this is NOT a good idea. As a sailboater who navigates the Long Island Sound, I have taken many hands-on training and a classroom-based safety course. I have also taken numerous, very educational, online boating courses. I also see firsthand, both good and very poor, unsafe vessel handling practices.

For most people, a Safe Boating Course is their first, and unfortunately, only, boating course they will take. The give and take of questions asked and answers given from, not only the instructor but other experienced boaters, cannot be replaced with a computer. While supplemental online courses might be appropriate in some cases, it is a bad idea for, what is essentially, an entry level, introduction to boating. Despite claims to the contrary, it is quite possible to have one family member take courses on behalf of others with the benefit of convenience trumping the need to ensure that all persons on the helm are adequately trained. There are too many “yahoos” on the waterways as it is. This proposal will just make it easier for this situation to continue to prevail.

In summary, I oppose the allowing of online courses in boater safety.

Regards,  
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