

Environment Committee Testimony S.B 699
Public Hearing Feb 27, 2015

Co-Chair: Senator Kennedy
Co-Chair: Representative Albis
Members of the Committee

I am writing to you to express my thoughts on Proposed Committee Bill No. 699 **AN ACT ESTABLISHING A MINIMUM AGE FOR TOWING ANY PERSON BY VESSEL AND REQUIRING THE COMPLETION OF A SAFE TOWING COURSE PRIOR TO ENGAGING IN SUCH TOWING BY VESSEL.**

I **OPPOSE** this proposed bill.

The current law; Section 1. Section 15-140e of the general statutes is sufficient to allow the safe operation of watercraft. There is no need to expand the laws and further constrain the recreational use of boats and “towing of any person”.

I was operating boats on Lake Pocotopaug 60 years ago, when I was seven, (7), years old. I was enjoying ‘water-skiing’ with my family and friends when I was fourteen, (14), including operating the boat myself. My parents were careful to insure I understood all safe operating procedures, had sufficient experience and complied all the rules, first by ‘directly’ supervising the operation of the boat and later by allowing me to take responsibility on my own. Operating a boat and towing ‘water-skiers’ and “tubers” is learned and then practiced, and whether under supervision of instructors and competent practitioners, it is a personal responsibility. When my daughter was twelve (12) years old, she and I took the Coast Guard Auxiliary boating course together, not only to make sure she complied with the law, but to insure she understood ‘safe boating principles’. We then practiced operating our boat, so I was sure she not only knew the rules, but could handle the boat and comply with the rules for ‘safe boating operation’. Both individual training and parental supervision for our ‘youth’ is what is needed. The lack of ‘taking personal responsibility’ cannot be legislated for compliance, it just isn’t effective. It only serves to reduce or eliminate a freedom, a personal pursuit or recreational opportunity. It also subverts one key learning tool : “responsibility”.

The current law not only requires a “Vessel Operators License” or “Safe Boating Certificate”, but it limits ‘youth’ under 16 to operating a boat *‘unless a person is under the direct onboard supervision of a person who is at least eighteen years of age and <already required by law> to obtain a safe boating certificate...’* We have supervision. We have education. And we also have ‘opportunity’ for our youth, to participate and enjoy active participation. The best learning will come from actual operation and what better way than in the direct supervision of an adult . . . not just a course. I think the current law is sufficient for operating a boat AND for operating a boat while towing a person. We do not need more limiting legislation.

Perhaps the ‘safe boating courses’ can be enhanced to include more instruction on ‘safe towing’. We do not need a new law for this. A simple conversation with the Commissioner of DEEP should suffice.

If you find it necessary to move forward with such ‘poorly thought out legislation’, please at least consider a ‘grand-father’ clause for current ‘safe boating certificate’ holders, so the burden on both the DEEP and “Current Recreational Boaters” is not broadened.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful considerations on this proposed bill.

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