

**FRANK B. KEMP**

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**REMARKS PREPARED FOR PUBLIC HEARING – FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2015**

**IN SUPPORT OF SB-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**

**My name is Frank Kemp, I live at 20 Seagate Road, Darien, Connecticut.**

**I am a member of the United States Power Squadrons, and have taught extensively for my local Squadron.**

**I am a member of the Darien Selectmen’s Advisory Commission on Coastal Waters (known locally as the Harbor Commission).**

**I am a member of the Noroton Yacht Club where I have taught boating safety and navigation to adults and young people.**

**However, today, I am speaking on my own behalf and I am not representing any of these organizations.**

**Bill 699 makes sense – and while it is aching-heart-tragedy that brings it to the table at this time, it is appropriate to change our law.**

**State boating standards have been a topic of discussion for years: too tough, too loose – take your pick, take your year. Personally, I think that they are too loose, and that by synchronizing the Connecticut standards to the National standards – we have lost a lot of autonomy, and wisdom, in how to handle a boat on open water, and get back safely.**

**With the prospect of Bill 699, however, Emily’s Law, we have an opportunity to put Connecticut back in a leadership role, in terms of boating safety and education.**

**We need only to look at the standards for “drivers education” and the graduated-license program young people getting their licenses. As you know – young people can secure the right to drive a car only through a series of restrictions on**

the number of passengers, the use of cell phones, and a curfew. When it comes to boating, though, it is still “the wild west” out there – with many, many perils awaiting them.

Boats don’t have brakes, and when they do stop, the propeller may be spinning, even if in neutral or with the engine off, and the tangle of tow-lines and floats presents a complexity in loading and unloading. Add the difficulty of communication between the person being towed and the team on the boat, and add the chance of collision among boats as they circle each other, and you have an accident waiting to happen. And it did happen, in August, in Greenwich.

I have discussed this legislation with representatives of local police who serve on the water during the summer. They have universally expressed support for the bill, and the concept that underlies it. Their support is because they know, from their on-the-scene observations, that it makes sense to make people aware of the dangers of towing, and it raises the public’s awareness of its implications on public safety.

I believe that those who deliver boating education in the state can easily handle the demands of this step-up in educational requirements within their courses: “that’s what they do” – they educate. And I believe that this is the right time to raise the standards for education.

Incidentally – over the last five years I have testified to this Committee, and the Legislative Regulations Review Committee, in opposition to approving boating education on-line, in lieu of a classroom experience. While I still remain cautious and apprehensive about the overall application of computer training for boating, in this case, I do see an opportunity for this topic to be covered in appropriate on-line sessions. This may be either within the classroom or as an add-on for those needing to be grandfathered. As for the tough task of working out how “train the grandfathers,” I am confident that the DEEP will be able to work out the details in the time-frame that is proposed, and that this is not a reason to “go slow” or to “hold back” on this worthy concept. Go forward, and give the “grandfathers” the benefit of a touch of retraining if need be, along the way.

Thank you for your attention – please pass this bill. I would be pleased to answer any questions.

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