

Testimony on HB 5145
Environment Committee

February 10, 2016

Co-Chairs Kennedy and Albis, Vice Chairs Moore and Arconti, Ranking Memebers
Chapin and Shaban, and members of the Environment Committee.

I am writing in support of Bill 5145.

Thank you for your time in considering the safety of those boating at night on
Candlewood Lake

I was a delegate on the Candlewood Lake Authority for over 13 years, and served as
chairman for 10 years. I feel I am extremely well versed regarding issues on
Candlewood.

As I sure you are aware, over the years there have been several serious, and some fatal
accidents on Candlewood Lake. These accidents tend to happen in the late night or early
morning hours.

For example, one of those fatal accidents occurred on 7/19/2008 at approximately 1:15
am. In addition there are now numerous DEEP permitted night fishing tournaments on
Candlewood Lake. It is common to come upon a fishing boat at night fishing
Candlewood with no lights at all displayed. When I have questioned these fishermen
regarding this practice, I have been told that it is to prevent other participants in the
fishing tournament from seeing where they are fishing.

The current speed limit at night is 25 mph from a half hour after sunset to half an hour
before sunrise. I am a frequent boater on Candlewood and have an acute knowledge of
the hazards, shoreline and water depth on the lake. However, when boating at night the
hills surrounding the lake throw shadows which can easily affect a boater's judgment of
where the shoreline begins, therefore affecting their view of where to expect hazards. In
addition, there are unfortunately boaters on the lake at night who either raft, or operate
their vessels without working bow and stern lights. When operating at 25 or 30 mph, the
reaction time for a boat to avoid a collision at night is no more than a split second. If
alcohol or drug use is added to that equation, a collision would be unavoidable as we
have seen with serious accidents on the lake in past years.

In Connecticut there are no less than 13 lakes that have either no motors, or 6 mph limits
at night. (Highland and Bantam Lake for example) In contrast, there are only 4 lakes
with a night time speed limit of 25 mph. I would ask you to propose a speed limit of 6
mph from 11:00 pm to ½ hour before sunrise, or 6:00 am.

I feel that your constituents and businesses on the lake would welcome this long overdue change on Candlewood. I am confident that this regulation change could prevent serious accidents on the lake in the future.

Please let me know how you feel about this proposal, and how you would suggest we proceed.

Sincerely,

Patrick E. Callahan
New Fairfield, CT