
OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 6637 (as amended by House "A" and "B")*

AN ACT REQUIRING AN INVASIVE SPECIES STAMP FOR THE OPERATION OF A MOTORBOAT ON THE WATERS OF THE STATE.

SUMMARY

This bill requires owners of registered vessels (i.e., generally, any type of watercraft except a seaplane) to pay an annual aquatic invasive species (AIS) fee. The annual fee is \$5 for in-state vessels and \$20 for out-of-state vessels.

A person registering a vessel in Connecticut with the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) must pay the AIS fee annually to DMV at the same time as paying any required vessel registration fee. (By law, a registration expires on April 30 of the year following its issuance.)

A person with a vessel registered out of state who intends to operate the vessel on inland Connecticut waters must pay the AIS fee to the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP). The fee must be paid annually and is valid until December 31 of each year. A person who operates an out-of-state registered vessel on inland Connecticut waters without first paying the AIS fee commits an infraction and is subject to a fine of up to \$85.

The bill requires DMV and DEEP to deposit all AIS fee proceeds into the renamed Connecticut lakes, rivers, and ponds preservation account. Under current law, the account is specific to lakes and ponds. The bill expands its purposes to include rivers.

The bill requires DEEP to use at least 80% of the AIS fee proceeds for (1) programs to eradicate aquatic invasive species and cyanobacteria blooms; (2) education and public outreach programs about protecting and preserving state lakes, rivers, and ponds; and (3) grants to state and municipal agencies and nonprofit organizations to

conduct research and provide education on managing state lakes, rivers, and ponds.

Lastly, the bill authorizes DEEP environmental conservation police officers to enforce the noise ordinance of any municipality bordering Candlewood Lake (i.e., Brookfield, Danbury, New Fairfield, New Milford, and Sherman) on the lake's waters. If more than one of these municipalities has a noise ordinance, the officers may enforce the most restrictive one.

*House Amendment "A" replaces the underlying bill with similar provisions. In doing so, it (1) requires vessel owners to pay an AIS fee instead of purchase an invasive species stamp; (2) adds a penalty for out-of-state violators; (3) delays the effective date from October 1, 2019, to January 1, 2020; and (4) makes other minor changes.

*House Amendment "B" adds the noise ordinance enforcement provision.

EFFECTIVE DATE: January 1, 2020, except the noise ordinance enforcement provision is effective upon passage.

CONNECTICUT LAKES, RIVERS, AND PONDS PRESERVATION ACCOUNT

The bill renames the Connecticut lakes and ponds preservation account as the Connecticut lakes, rivers, and ponds preservation account. (By law, it is a separate, nonlapsing General Fund account.) It also expands the account's purposes to include rivers.

Thus, the bill requires the DEEP commissioner to use the money in the account for the following purposes:

1. restoring and rehabilitating Connecticut lakes, rivers, and ponds;
2. DEEP programs to eradicate aquatic invasive species and cyanobacteria blooms;
3. education and public outreach programs to enhance the public's understanding of the need to preserve and protect the state's

lakes, rivers, and ponds;

4. allocating grants to state and municipal agencies and nonprofit organizations to conduct research and provide public education on managing state lakes, rivers, and ponds;
5. funding services that support the protection and conservation of the state's lakes, rivers, and ponds; and
6. reimbursing DMV for the cost of producing, issuing, renewing, and replacing Save Our Lakes commemorative license plates, including administrative expenses.

By law, proceeds from DMV's sale of Save Our Lakes plates are deposited to the account. The DEEP commissioner may also receive private donations to the account.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Environment Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 28 Nay 0 (03/08/2019)

Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 42 Nay 5 (05/14/2019)