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## OLR Bill Analysis

### sHB 6811

#### ***AN ACT CONCERNING REVISIONS TO THE VESSEL REGISTRATION AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES FEE.***

#### **SUMMARY**

Beginning October 1, 2024, this bill (1) decouples the collection of the state Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) fee, which certain boaters pay, from the boat registration process and (2) eliminates a two-tiered fee schedule based on a boater's state residency. (The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) learned during a federal audit that federal law does not allow either of these practices.)

Under current law, people who register boats in Connecticut, and out-of-state boaters operating on Connecticut waters, must pay an annual Connecticut AIS fee of \$5 and \$20, respectively. In-state boaters pay the fee when they register a vessel with the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), while out-of-state boaters pay the fee to DEEP. In separating the fee from state boat registrations, the bill removes DMV's involvement from the AIS fee collection process.

The bill creates a \$7 AIS stamp for individuals and a \$20 AIS decal for vessels, with a limited exception for marine dealers, engine manufacturers, and surveyors. A person must comply with the law by getting a stamp or a decal, either of which is valid for the calendar year in which it is issued. Under the bill, DEEP is required to collect AIS stamp and decal fees through the same system that it uses for boating, hunting, and fishing licenses (i.e., the online sportsmen licensing system). As under current law, AIS fees fund the Connecticut Lakes, Rivers and Ponds Preservation account, which the DEEP commissioner uses to restore and rehabilitate lakes, rivers, and ponds in the state, including by eradicating AIS, among other purposes (CGS § 14-21aa).

Anyone who operates a vessel on inland state waters without an AIS stamp or decal, as applicable, commits an infraction and must be fined

up to \$85. (This is the same penalty under current law for not paying AIS fees.)

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2024

### **AIS STAMP**

The bill establishes an AIS stamp for an individual who operates a vessel that is required to display a registration decal (issued by this or another state) on inland state waters. An AIS stamp is \$7 and is valid for the calendar year in which it is issued. (The stamp follows the person, not the vessel.)

### **AIS DECAL**

Instead of purchasing an individual AIS stamp, a person who owns a vessel that must display a registration decal (issued by this or another state) may purchase an AIS decal for the vessel. The decal must be permanently placed on the vessel in the middle of the port side (i.e., left side) at the hull or the operator's station so that it is visible to law enforcement approaching on the port side.

An AIS decal is \$20, and the DEEP commissioner may charge an additional fee of up to \$5 for producing, processing, and mailing it. An AIS decal is valid for the calendar year in which it is issued, and it covers anyone who operates that vessel. (The decal follows the vessel, not the person.)

### **EXCEPTION**

The bill's AIS stamp and decal provisions do not apply to anyone operating a vessel that is registered as a marine dealer, engine manufacturer, or surveyor, as long as the vessel is numbered under state law (CGS § 15-145) with a suffix of DL, XP, MA, or YB and has a current registration decal displayed.

### **COMMITTEE ACTION**

Environment Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 33    Nay 0    (03/24/2023)