

HCS HB 1591 -- WATERCRAFT OPERATION

SPONSOR: Wood

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Standing Committee on Crime Prevention and Public Safety by a vote of 7 to 0. Voted "Do Pass" by the Rules- Legislative Oversight Committee by a vote of 12 to 0.

This bill specifies that the operator of a watercraft that is in violation of the requirements that the watercraft be equipped with a personal flotation device for each person on board shall be guilty of an infraction and fined not more than \$25. The bill also specifies that the owner of any watercraft in violation of the slow-no wake provisions shall be guilty of an infraction and fined not more than \$25.

This bill requires the Department of Public Safety to implement a no wake cove for any class three vessel when the cove's main juncture is less than 800 feet from the main channel of the lake.

PROPONENTS: Supporters say that this affects every waterway, but it centers around the Lake of the Ozarks. Because it is different than a lot of the other lakes in the country, it is voted one of the best recreational lakes. Boat size has increased, but cove sizes have not increased, and this creates an issue with wake. Ticket-issuing for safety jacket violations is also down, because the current fine is quite hefty. Legislation to reduce the fine is necessary, because it might increase enforcement. While large boats are great, they are not great for wake. Boat owners should be fined.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Wood and Bud Simmons, Mariner Pier 31.

OPPONENTS: Those who oppose the bill say that the biggest concern with this legislation is the potential for unknown or unintended consequences. It will not serve the economy of the lake well to pass legislation to slow the boating industry. It would be better to focus on fining boats than it is to focus on regulating the size of the boats.

Testifying against the bill were Jeremy Anderson, Lake Ozarks Dealer Association and the Missouri Marine Dealers Association.

OTHERS: Others testifying on the bill say that the Water Patrol Division has the authority to promulgate rules related to buoy permits. They can permit coves as no wake if the cove is 400 feet or less. This legislation would just increase the size of the

coves they can permit as no wake. Additionally, getting fined for a boat violation will not add points to a person's driver's license, since drivers' licenses are not required for boat operation.

Testifying on the bill was Captain Matt Walz, Missouri State Highway Patrol.