

Ohio Legislature

House Transportation Committee

House Bill 284 – Opponent Testimony

21 May 2024

Chairman McClain, Vice Chair Dobos, Ranking Member Grim and members of the House Transportation Committee, I appreciate this opportunity to provide opponent testimony regarding House Bill 284. Having had a boating administration career that began in 1979 and lasted through 2017, which included various state and national positions focused on boating activity and safety, I wish to address the legislative proposal to allow for the use of a mirror in lieu of having an observer on board a vessel while waterskiing or similar activities are taking place associated with that vessel.

Regarding my experience, it began in 1979 when I became a Watercraft Officer for the State of Ohio, serving on Lake Erie and inland waters. That was followed by my completion of a Master's Degree in Public Administration, where nearly all of my research was on recreational boating. Then, I became the Boating Administrator for the State of Idaho for nearly nine years before accepting a mid-management position at U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters in their Office of Boating Safety. The Governor of Ohio then gave me the opportunity to serve as the Chief of the Ohio Division of Watercraft, where I served two Governors for nearly seven years. Lastly, I finished my career back at U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters, where I served as the Chief of the National Recreational Boating Safety Program for 14 years. That Program administers the Federal statutes, regulations, and legislation regarding recreational boating. It provides grants to the States and national nonprofit organizations, regulates boating construction standards and compliance with such, provides training and support to the states, compiles statistics on recreational boating activities and safety, and more.

During my 38 years involved professionally with recreational boating and safety, I witnessed the multitude of safety concerns and the tragic results that resulted from various dangerous practices, one of which has been distractions that take the boat operator's attention away from their watching where they are going and other vessels or dangers that may be around them. The advantage of requiring an observer on board a vessel while water skiing or similar activity is taking place from that vessel is that the operator can continue to operate while keeping their attention on their driving and the dangers around them and not be distracted by having to redirect their attention toward a mirror. In virtually all forms of transportation, distractions of

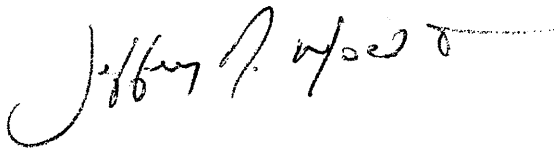
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the operator are recognized as a major cause of accidents and the resulting damage, injuries and deaths associated with such.

For many decades, Ohio has been one of the leaders in our Country regarding boating activity and safety; and I would encourage you to continue to strive to make boating more enjoyable and safe. To do this, I encourage you to retain your requirement for having a responsible observer on board a recreational vessel while water skiing and similar activities are taking place related to that vessel. Thus, I oppose H.B. 284 and encourage you to defeat this legislative proposal.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeffrey N. Hoedt

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Jeffrey N. Hoedt", with a horizontal line extending to the right from the end of the signature.