



PERRY YACHT CLUB
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To: Senate Transportation Committee
From: Jeff Messick and Perry Yacht Club
Date: February 13, 2015
RE: Senate Bill 190 Testimony

My name is Jeff Messick and I am offering this testimony on behalf of Perry Yacht Club.

The Kansas Boater Safety Education law requires people under 21 years of age to be certified to operate watercraft. This law addressed real safety issues and it is assumed that young lives have been saved as a result of the law. The Kansas Boater Certification Course covers over 60 topics. This course can be taken in a classroom or completed in as little as three hours online.

Problem: Kansas Boater Certification is a prerequisite for teaching young people to sail

A number of the topics covered in the Kansas course are not relevant to operating small sailboats (e.g.: Types of Engines and Drives, Fueling Your Boat Safely, Personal Watercraft (PWCs), Ignition Safety and Engine Shut-Off Switches, Fire Extinguishers, Skiing and Tubing, Waste Oil Disposal, and so on). In fact, some powerboat docking and maneuvering techniques are irrelevant for small sail craft and can cause confusion. Furthermore, some of the powerboat-related topics included for Kansas Boater Certification are beyond the comprehension of 8-12 year-old children learning to sail.

Proposed alternative for teaching and certifying sailing safety education

The American Sailing Association (ASA) and U.S. Sailing are the two national organizations that have developed professional courses for training youth and adults in sailing and water safety. These organizations inspect and certify facilities in the United States and throughout the world. They also certify professional sailing instructors through rigorous Instructor Qualification Clinics. Only experienced sailors are eligible to become professional sailing instructors and those who apply to be sailing instructors are carefully screened.

Professional sail instruction courses include most of the topics covered in the Kansas certification course (e.g., Parts of a Boat, Boat Capacity, Docking, Knot Tying, Boat Trailing, Unlawful Operation, Personal Flotation Devices, Rules of the Road, etc.). However, there are three major differences between professional courses and the Kansas Course: (1) professional courses are conducted on the water, docks, and land, where students have hands-on training; (2) professional courses focus on the potential sailing-related safety issues not included in the Kansas course, and; (3) professional courses consist of at least two days of training, versus the three hours (minimum) required for Kansas Certification. **In the proposed amendment, all relevant safety components of the Kansas certification course would be included in addition to safety components unique to sailboat operation.**

At present, the Kansas law requires individuals under 21 to learn to sail only when accompanied by adults on their vessel. Most of the boats used to teach sailing (e.g., Sunfish and Optimists) are designed to safely carry only one individual. In order to ensure student safety on the water, single-person boats are closely followed on the water by qualified instructors in "coach boats".

Background and Conclusion

Fifteen years ago Perry Yacht Club (PYC) in Meriden, KS became an American Sailing Association (ASA) facility in order to standardize its Sail Education Courses and ensure that their program meets the highest, most rigorous standards. Since 1999 (well before Kansas enacted boater certification laws), PYC has certified hundreds of adults and youth sailors. ASA also certifies PYC's sailing instructors

through a rigorous 4-day Instructor Qualification Clinic.

The amendment proposed by Senator Holland eliminates the requirement for Kansas certification prior to taking a professional sailing course. It also allows those under 21 years of age who have completed a professional sailing course to operate sailboats under 20-feet without supervision. This amendment would not permit sail-certified youth to independently operate boats over 20-feet or powerboats.

We support these amendments. It is our opinion that professional sailing courses are more comprehensive and relevant to youth sailors than the Kansas online/classroom certification program. We also believe that those who complete an approved course will be well prepared for sailing alone. They will have more knowledge of safety and sailing skills than they would have if they had taken the Kansas certification course.