



RECREATIONAL BOATING ASSOCIATION OF WASHINGTON

Voice of Northwest Boating

P.O. Box 23601
Federal Way, WA 98093

2007 LEGISLATIVE SESSION REPORT

By David Kutz, Past President & Government Affairs Director

April 22ND was the final day of the Washington State Legislative Session that commenced on January 8TH – this was our long session. We made great progress this year supporting and working hard on three good boating bills that passed in Olympia. Here is a session recap:

1. **SHB 1651** is a boating bill we have been working on all year with the Boating Issues Study Group. We testified several times in various committees for the bill and the bill passed. It will indirectly return some of our watercraft excise tax (WET) to a new Boating Activities Account to be used for State boating programs, boating safety, and boating infrastructure projects. The bill was amended to not use dedicated funds from our WET taxes, but the Legislative budget calls for \$2 million (per biennium) to go to the new Boating Activities Account, with 80% going to marine law enforcement. The remaining balance will fund a boating study identifying boaters' needs. RBAW will be involved in this important study for the Legislature.

At this time we're waiting for the Governor's signature, which is expected in early May. We owe a great deal of thanks to our Boating Issues Study Group chaired by Steve Greaves. The Group also includes the Northwest Marine Trade Association, Marine Law Enforcement, State Parks, the USPS, and other boating organizations or agencies.

We couldn't have succeeded without some key Legislative Assistance provided by House champions Rep. Bill Fromhold of Vancouver and Rep. Gary Alexander of Thurston & Lewis County. Other Legislators important to the bill's effort are Rep. Brian Sullivan, Sen. Ken Jacobson, Sen. Phil Rockefeller, and Sen. Karen Fraser. Also two friendly Lobbyists provided valuable assistance, both Ray Schow of RBAW and Cliff Webster of Northwest Marine Trades.

2. **SB 6044** - The Senate Derelict Vessel Removal bill. RBAW has been testifying in favor of this bill throughout the session. We support it because we want to be part of the solution of getting rid of unsafe and harmful derelict vessels from the State's waterways. This is a dedicated fund solely for removing derelict vessels. For qualifying vessels, the local authority pays 10% while the State kicks in a full 90% from the fund.

The bill adds a \$1 temporary surcharge to the existing derelict vessel charge (\$2) on all boat registrations to help remove the current backlog of derelict vessels, The surcharge is supposed to go away when the backlog of derelict vessels is removed. The surcharge cannot be used to fund removal of vessels 75 ft. or longer.

The Bill also calls for \$1 million dollars per year from the General Fund for Derelict Vessel Removal. We support this too because it indirectly uses part of our watercraft excise taxes for a boating purpose. The bill has passed the Legislature and is also pending Governor's signature.

3. Senate Resolution 8624. On April 13, 2006 the Senate passed this very special Resolution. It recognized RBAW for its 50 years of service to the boaters of Washington. The Resolution commended RBAW for it's purchase of Sucia Island in the 50's and it's activities with State Parks over the years. It also acknowledged our Legislative work for the 2005 mandatory boating safety education bill, as well as other boating safety measures over the years. RBAW officers and members witnessed the event from the Senate Gallery.

4. HB 1002. Permits non-resident boat buyers and visitors to be allowed to stay in Washington State for 12 full months without paying sales or excise tax, as long as they buy a cruising permit (\$500-\$800). The bill passed both chambers and has been signed by the Governor. This bill will boost the local marine economy by allowing non-resident boats and new boat buyers (30 ft and over) to stay in Washington for a full year as a visitor, without paying sales or excise tax.

5. SB 5954 – This Bill would have required Mandatory Liability Insurance on boats 30 feet an over. We testified in favor, but made a recommendation to lower the 30' requirement to 25' or something more applicable to marina boat lengths. The Ports and NMTA also favored this Bill. Unfortunately the bill died in committee but we might see it again next year. The motivating reason behind the bill was because of all the marina fires we have had in the Pacific Northwest over the last 5 years.

BOATERS 2007 LEGISLATIVE DAY ANOTHER SUCCESS

On February 6th a few dozen RBAW Boaters descended on Olympia for our Annual Legislative Reception. We had the above boating Bills to discuss with our Legislators. It's always a great opportunity talk about taxes and government issues that affect recreational boating.

Each year we invite our State Senators and Representatives to this nice event held at Anthony's Home Port in Olympia. Over the years, the event has helped increase our exposure to the Legislature and bring our issues to the forefront.

Our Lobbyist Ray Schow was there to assist us with our discussions and help boaters connect with their political representatives.