

While the first public hearings were held during the inclement weather on January 18 and 19, there is still time to make your voice heard. If you haven't already done so, please contact your Legislators today!

RBAW ACTION ALERT!!

PLEASE TAKE ACTION TO OPPOSE

HOUSE BILL 2444 & SENATE BILL 6264

Call or email your Representatives and Senator

House Bill 2444, sponsored by Rep. Jeff Morris (D-Anacortes) takes \$150,000 from the Recreation Resource Account (RRA). The RRA is the un-refunded gas tax money boaters pay and funds grants for boating infrastructure around the state such as launch ramp expansion and repair. The \$150,000 would be used to study development of a Marine Innovation Center at Skagit Valley College.

Senate Bill 6264, sponsored by Sen. Kevin Ranker (D-Anacortes) adds \$1 to various types of vessel registration fees to develop a Marine Innovation Center at Skagit Valley College.

Tell your lawmakers that:

- Recreational boaters were never consulted on this bill – Rep. Morris and Sen. Ranker simply targeted your money, drafted it, and introduced it – without ever saying a word to boaters;
- The House Bill would raid a dedicated capital account for infrastructure that drives jobs, and utilize it toward a work group and a study in one part of NW Washington;
- The Senate Bill adds a new fee to boater registration when it's already documented by the Legislature's own study that boaters already pay over \$30 million more in fees and taxes than boaters receive in services.
- The Recreation Resource Account, created through a voter-passed initiative, was put in place to take unclaimed non-highway gas tax purchases that are technically eligible for a refund, and contribute them toward the infrastructure for recreational boating. The voters of this state created it for capital purposes – not an operating budget study;
- Boaters already pay special add-on registration fees for derelict vessel removal and invasive species study.
- The Marine Innovation Center would be housed at an institute of higher education (Skagit Valley College) – if this is a worthy idea, the Legislature should take the funding to study it or develop it from their higher education budget, or seek grants – not raid a capital account or add a fee on boaters;

- The boating industry does not see this as a priority and is steadfast that it opposes **HB 2444 and SB 6264**;
- If this precedent is allowed to stand, what stops the next legislature from taking dedicated account funds or adding a new fee for other pet purposes?
- Boaters already pay \$35 million a biennium into the state general fund in the form of a “Watercraft Excise Tax” – no other recreational group has paid this excise tax since the passage of Initiative 695 over a decade ago. Legislators *have* general fund money, paid into them by boaters, if they consider the Center for Marine Innovation to be a priority use funds from the General Fund;
- If we want to improve recreational boating, let’s take steps to make it more accessible and to invest in boating infrastructure and thus jobs – instead of spending boaters’ money on a study / develop a facility in Skagit County.

Please call the Legislative Hotline at 1-800-562-6000 or email your legislators that you are adamantly opposed to these bills.

You can contact your Representatives and your Senator via email by using this format: Firstname.Lastname@leg.wa.gov – (example: Marcie.Maxwell@leg.wa.gov)

When contacting to oppose **HB 2444**, please give particular priority to contacting all the members of the **House Community & Economic Development & Housing Committee**:

<http://www.leg.wa.gov/House/Committees/CDH/Pages/MembersStaff.aspx>

When contacting to oppose **SB 6264**, please give particular priority to contacting all the members of the **Senate Energy and Natural Resources & Marine Waters Committee**:

<http://www.leg.wa.gov/Senate/Committees/ENRM/Pages/MembersStaff.aspx>

A link to **House Bill 2444** is:

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/documents/billdocs/2011-12/Pdf/Bills/House%20Bills/2444.pdf>

A link to **Senate Bill 6264** is:

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/documents/billdocs/2011-12/Pdf/Bills/Senate%20Bills/6264.pdf>