

Dear Senator or Representative:

I am a recreational boater and I oppose HB 2444 and SB 6264.

Recreational boaters were never consulted on **HB 2244** – Rep. Morris simply targeted your money, drafted it, and introduced it – without ever saying a word to boaters. **SB 6264** also targets registrations paid by boaters for the common good of boating, and adds to the cost of those for one specific purpose in one part of the state.

The House Bill would raid a dedicated capital account for infrastructure that creates jobs, and utilizes it toward a work group and a study in the sponsor's district.

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 un-claimed 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.

Thank you.