

2017 Regular Session

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 9

BY REPRESENTATIVE BISHOP AND SENATOR CORTEZ

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

To urge and request the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries to examine the possibility of issuance of a "safe boater" decal to designate vessels that are certified as compliant with the state and federal laws concerning safe boating.

WHEREAS, with fifteen thousand miles of tidal coastline, five thousand miles of inland waterways, nearly three hundred fifty thousand boats registered in the state for recreational use, and a nickname of the "Sportsman's Paradise", boats are everywhere in the state of Louisiana and are used not only for fishing but for skiing, sailing, and other recreational activities on our waterways; and

WHEREAS, there are numerous laws pertaining to safety equipment required to be onboard any boat in use including requirements for personal flotation devices, mufflers, lights, and fire extinguishers; and additional laws delineating safe operation of watercraft including requirements for safe operation, restrictions on where boats can be operated, and prohibitions on overloading boats, over powering boats, and riding on gunwales; and requirements for boat identification numbers and display of those numbers; and

WHEREAS, the primary enforcement of these numerous laws is carried out largely by the enforcement agents of the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries through random boating safety compliance stops of boats on the water and stops that involve inspections of the watercraft and verification of the presence of the required equipment and registration materials; and

WHEREAS, although boating safety compliance stops are understandably necessary to maintain the safety of the entire boating community, frequent stops of vessels that are continually in compliance with the law diminish the enjoyment of the boating experience and reduce the amount of time that the boater can be on the water enjoying himself; and

WHEREAS, an outwardly visible and easily seen indication that a vessel has been checked by agents of the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and found to be in compliance with the boating safety laws could minimize the number of random boating safety compliance stops any one boater must endure and would allow wildlife and fisheries agents to focus their attention on those boaters who do not have a positive safety compliance record; and

WHEREAS, it is possible that the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries could implement a program whereby vessels are certified by the department to be in compliance with the statutory and regulatory safe boating requirements and to have no violations of statute or regulation on their record for a designated period of time, with the certification being verified by a decal that is to be placed on the outside of the boat hull near the identification number, thus enabling the boater to enjoy his boating activity without intrusion and allowing the wildlife agent to be available to enforce other actions where necessary; and

WHEREAS, prior to implementation of such a program, the department would need to evaluate the efficacy and usefulness of such a program and what impact such a program might have on the safety compliance and performance of the boating public in the state and a report on those findings to the legislature would inform the legislature of the need for legislation to enable a certified safe boater program.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge and request the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries to examine the possibility of issuance of a "safe boater" decal to designate vessels that are certified as compliant with the state and federal laws concerning safe boating and submit a report of findings no later than March 1, 2018, to the House Committee on Natural Resources and Environment and the Senate Committee on Natural Resources.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be forwarded to the secretary of the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries.

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SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE