



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Dean G. Skelos

Senate Passes Boater Safety Bill

DEAN G. SKELOS May 16, 2011

Measure Requires Those Convicted of BWI to Obtain a Boating Safety Certificate

The New York State Senate today passed an important bill that requires all individuals, regardless of age, who have been found guilty of operating a boat after consuming alcohol to take a boating safety course before they can operate a boat again. With peak boating season soon approaching, bill S.2903B, sponsored by Senator John DeFrancisco (R-C-I, Syracuse), helps prevent accidents stemming from individuals who are guilty of boating while intoxicated.

“Boating tragedies on Skaneateles Lake, Oneida Lake, and the July 2006 BWI death of Syracuse-resident Tiffany Heitkamp have brought the problem of boating while intoxicated to the forefront,” said Senator DeFrancisco. “It is important to educate those who have already been convicted of boating while intoxicated, on how to drive a boat safely, in the hopes of preventing future tragedies.”

“Whether operating a vehicle or a watercraft, individuals must act responsibly for the safety of passengers and others around them,” Senate Majority Leader Dean G. Skelos said. “For those who violate the privilege of boating by operating a vessel under the influence, it is important that they fully understand the dangers of their actions and what it means to be a conscientious boater. Requiring a boating safety course for all individuals convicted of a watercraft-related drinking offense would help achieve that goal.”

The state already requires those age 21 and older and who are convicted of boating while intoxicated to obtain a boating safety certificate before operating a vessel. The bill passed today expands upon that law by requiring those under 21 and convicted of an alcohol-related boating offense to obtain a certificate as well. The bill has been sent to the Assembly.

In addition to the BWI bill acted upon today, the Senate passed S.4177, sponsored by Senator Charles J. Fuschillo, Jr. (R, Merrick), which strengthens penalties for those driving under the influence with a conditional license. It corrects a gap in the current law by allowing an individual driving with a conditional license stemming from an earlier DUI arrest and who is then charged with another DWI or DWAI offense to be charged with a class E felony. The bill has been sent to the Assembly.