



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
PAT QUINN

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Contact

Press Line: (312) 814-3158

Brooke Anderson Brooke.Anderson@illinois.gov

Grant Klinzman Grant.Klinzman@illinois.gov

Governor Quinn Signs Laws to Make Waterways Safer for Illinois Families

House Laws Crack Down on Boaters Who Drive Under the Influence of Alcohol

CHICAGO – Governor Pat Quinn today issued a stern warning to anyone who pilots a boat while under the influence of alcohol: if you're drunk while operating a boat, you may lose your right to operate a car. Standing at Chicago's new 31st Street marina and joined by the family of Tony Borcia – the 10-year old Libertyville boy killed last July by a drunk boater – Governor Quinn signed two bills to crack down on boating under the influence and strengthen other provisions of Illinois' boating safety laws. Today's action is part of the governor's agenda to keep Illinois families safe.

"One year ago, Tony Borcia and his family were enjoying a day out on the lake, tubing behind a pontoon boat. Suddenly a large speedboat piloted by a man impaired by alcohol and drugs bore down on Tony, resulting in this fatal tragedy. We enact this law in Tony's memory," Governor Quinn said. "Tony Borcia could have been anyone's son, brother, grandson or nephew. People enjoying our magnificent waterways shouldn't have to worry about reckless, drunken boaters when they're out tubing, swimming or paddling."

"We need to change the culture that accepts and even encourages a driver of a boat to drink while driving. It is time to take our lakes and rivers back," said Margaret Borcia, Tony's mother, who launched the "Y-noT Project" to encourage responsible boating. She invited people to visit the project's website at www.ynotproject.com/.

Governor Quinn today signed Senate Bill 1479 – sponsored by State Senator Julie A. Morrison (D-Deerfield) and State Representative Scott Drury (D-Highwood) – which ensures that anyone operating a motorboat involved in an accident involving serious injury or death must consent to the chemical testing of their blood, breath or urine to determine blood alcohol or drug content. Operators who refuse testing, test positive for drugs or exceed the legal blood alcohol content limit, face suspension of their Illinois driver's license. This law takes effect on Jan. 1.

"Drinking and boating is every bit as dangerous as drinking and driving," Senator Morrison said, Tony Borcia's aunt and the chief sponsor of the legislation. "I hope this law will make everyone operating a boat think twice before consuming alcohol."

"Drunk and intoxicated boaters have stolen our lakes from local families, at times resulting in senseless and preventable tragedies," Representative Drury said. "These new laws will keep our communities safer by sending a strong message that the culture of irresponsible boating behavior will no longer be tolerated in Illinois."

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In 2012, there were 101 boating-related accidents on Illinois waters, resulting in 17 deaths and 77 injuries. Alcohol use was a contributing factor in 13 of the accidents and five of the fatalities.

Governor Quinn also signed Senate Bill 1310 – sponsored by State Senator Melinda Bush (D-Grayslake) and State Representative Michael J. Zalewski (D-Riverside) – which strengthens the state’s Boat Registration and Safety Act regarding a boat’s carrying capacity, redefines “authorized emergency watercraft” and hikes penalties on boat rental operators who fail to equip their crafts.

The new law, which takes effect immediately, clarifies that a person being towed by a watercraft, such as a skier, tuber or parasailer, is considered part of the total number of passengers for purposes of a boat’s carrying capacity. The clarification will curb overcrowding by closing a loophole for boat operators claiming that a passenger being towed is not part of the watercraft’s overall capacity.

The new law also adds flashing blue lights to the list of colored lights necessary for a watercraft to be designated an authorized emergency watercraft. This will enable Illinois Conservation Police, whose boats use flashing blue lights, to better enforce the law. Finally, the legislation boosts penalties on boat rental operators who fail to properly equip a rental craft with life jackets, a fire extinguisher or lighting.

“With summer in full swing and Illinois residents spending recreational time on the water, ensuring safe waterways is critical,” Representative Zalewski said. “I look forward to working with law enforcement officials to keep our children, families and friends safe while they enjoy Illinois’ lakes and rivers.”

“These new laws will help Illinois Conservation Police officers and other law enforcement units remind boaters and boat operators to be safe while spending time on the water this summer and year-round,” Illinois Department of Natural Resources Director Marc Miller said. “Staying safe starts with always wearing a life jacket, and never operating a boat while under the influence of drugs or alcohol.”

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