

Submitter: Alex Rees

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Energy and Environment

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB301

Dear Senate Committee on Energy and Environment,

My name is Alex, and I'm an active boater who regularly uses the Willamette River. I'm writing to voice my strong support for Senate Bill 301, which would remove ballast from the weight calculation in the Newberg Pool and help restore fair access to towed water sports like wakeboarding, tubing, and waterskiing.

The current rule unfairly penalizes boats with ballast systems — even if those systems are completely empty — by including their maximum capacity in the total weight. That means many families with modern recreational boats are excluded from enjoying the river, while heavier boats without ballast (like fishing or pontoon boats) are still allowed to tow riders. It's a confusing and inconsistent policy that punishes responsible boaters for the design of their vessel.

This bill makes a small but important adjustment that would simplify enforcement and make the rules easier for everyone to understand. There is no universal standard for how ballast capacity is registered, and many families have gone out of their way to purchase boats that meet the current requirements — only to be denied permits due to technicalities tied to other models in the same boat line. That's frustrating and disheartening for people who just want to enjoy time on the water with their families.

I don't believe the intent of the current policy was to block the vast majority of modern recreational boats from using this stretch of river. But that's exactly what's happening — and it's having a real impact on families, small businesses, and the boating community as a whole. Senate Bill 301 corrects this issue while maintaining the strong oversight that already exists in the Newberg Pool, including the weight limit, education requirements, permits, and fees.

This is a common-sense fix that supports fairness, safety, and access. I strongly encourage you to support SB 301 and help ensure that Oregon families can continue to responsibly enjoy the river.

Respectfully,  
Alex