

Submitter:

BRAD RENTFRO

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 Brad Rentfro and I live on the "pool" stretch of the Willamette River. I am writing to express my support for Senate Bill 301. The towed water sports community has a very simple and reasonable request with this legislation to be treated equally to all other boat users in the deep waters of the Newberg Pool.

Many boaters with ballast capability are unfairly excluded from participating in their favorite activities, such as tubing, water skiing and wakeboarding in the Newberg Pool, because their unused ballast weight is counted toward the overall weight limit. I'm all for restricting the monster rollers some of these boats can produce, but limiting river usability over potential weight seems like over-legislation. This is especially true since these same boats can cruise up and down the river currently at the same speeds used to pull towables. Again, it just seems counterintuitive.

This small adjustment makes it easier for the Oregon State Marine Board to manage the towed water sports program and for customers to understand which boats qualify. There is no national standard for registering ballast capacity, making compliance a moving target. The legislation's "maximum ballast capacity" is also overtly punitive. Families have purchased boats with smaller ballast capacity to ensure they are under the 5,500 combined weight limit, only to be denied a permit because their boat line has a model with a larger ballast, which they did not purchase.

I do not believe legislators intended to exclude more than 90% of new recreational boat models from the river, crushing local small businesses and making it almost impossible for everyday people to buy qualifying boats. We want to have the opportunity to share the river, have fun with our families and safely enjoy the sports we love for a few months out of the year.

With this legislation, the Newberg Pool will remain one of Oregon's most highly regulated water bodies. To tow riders in this river stretch, boaters must meet the weight requirement, complete an online safety education course, apply for a towed watersports decal and pay additional fees.

Please support local small businesses and families by passing this small yet meaningful ask.

Thank you,

Brad Rentfro