

Submitter: Juliann Linthorst

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Energy and Environment

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB301

My name is Juliann Linthorst and I have been boating on the upper Willamette since I was a toddler. I have been a boat owner since 2008. I am writing you to express my strong 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.

I personally was target last year and issued a citizens arrest citation for ballast use but went to court and was found not guilty.

I tried for almost a year to find a boat that was under the max ballast capacity, and after nearly 40 emails and conversations with the marine board, the head of the marine board stated that “because of fraud” even if I bought a boat that was custom built to be under the max ballast requirement, that the standard is “what is offered in the catalog and the max capacity of that boat model” and that other people abused and created custom build sheets that were untrue just to get a towed water sports endorsement.

We purchased a boat in May 2024 and it makes my mom heart sad that we legally cannot tow my children in a tube behind our boat just because of the ballast capacity. I grew up waterskiing and we plan to continue to teach our 3 boys (13,7,2) to waterski, however now we need to drive our boat to the lower willamette or Hagg Lake when the dock in Newberg in only 10 minutes from our home.

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. Today, a fishing or pontoon boat with a dry weight of 5,500 pounds is eligible to tow a tuber in the Newberg Pool, but an everyday recreational boat with a much lower dry weight cannot because it has ballast capability, which is prohibited.

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 like mine by passing this small yet meaningful ask.