

Submitter: Bryan McLean

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Energy and Environment

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB301

Chair Sollman, members of the committee my name is Bryan McLean. I am the co-owner of Northwest Boat Sports, a local small business in Oregon City. I strongly support SB 301.

Northwest Boat Sports has proudly served the Willamette River community for more than a decade, bringing the fun and excitement of watersports to thousands of Oregonians. Our services include boat sales, a full repair shop, accessory sales, boat storage and more. We employ 12 staff members and support them with livable-wage jobs, health insurance, dental insurance and matching 401k benefits.

In 2022, the Oregon State Legislature passed SB 1589, significantly limiting recreational boating in the Newberg Pool. This law has had devastating impacts on the Newberg Pool boating community and the businesses that depend on their support. SB 1589 revoked towed watersports permits from hundreds of local families, leading to significant declines in recreation.

SB 1589 also created challenges for countless small businesses along the Newberg Pool and their ability to provide good jobs for the community. Our business is down 30%, and due to the decline in recreation, we've been forced to reduce our staff by four full time employees. Local boaters have sold their boats and foot traffic is significantly down at stores and accessories shops serving boaters, leading to millions in lost economic activity. Sadly, some families have moved out of the area entirely due to the law.

The towed water sports community has a very simple and reasonable request with SB 301 to be treated equally to all other boat users in the deep man-made waters of the Newberg Pool. Today, our customers and the rest of the boating community are being unfairly excluded from participating in their favorite sports because their unused ballast capacity is being counted toward the 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 and will remain prohibited under SB 301.

SB 301 supports safe, reasonable and enforceable public access to the Newberg Pool. It supports local businesses like mine. With towed water sports access reintroduced in the area, boaters will commit to abiding by the laws and education standards set by the Oregon State Marine Board.

Boating is among Oregon's top 10 outdoor recreational activities. Oregonians spend more than 6.8 million activity days per year on the water cruising and participating in watersports. These activities provide valuable family time in our community along with promoting positive mental, emotional and physical health.

If you have any questions about recreational boating as you are navigating the session don't hesitate to reach out to me. Thank you for representing our beautiful State and thank you for your consideration in supporting SB 301.

Best Regards,

Bryan McLean
Co-Owner
Northwest Boat Sports