

# Environment Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No:** HB-5332 / [Bill Status](#) / [Public Hearing Testimony](#)

**Title:** AN ACT CONCERNING CERTAIN BOATING REGULATIONS.

**Vote Date:** 3/13/2026

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable Substitute

**PH Date:** 3/4/2026

**File No.:**

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## **SPONSORS OF BILL:**

Environment Committee

## **REASONS FOR BILL:**

This bill contains two sections discussing the prohibition of the act of extending one's limbs over the gunwale of the vessel while it is in operation and increasing the abandoned vessel fine and implementing recovery costs due to the abandonment of the vessel to the state and local law enforcement agencies.

## **SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE (IF APPLICABLE):**

Substitute language prohibits passengers from hanging any part of their body over a motorboat's gunwale while underway, increases fines for vessel abandonment and allows recovery of related costs, and clarifies that fines for certain boating violations may be issued to the vessel or watercraft registrant when the operator cannot be identified.

## **RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:**

### **Katie S. Dykes, Commissioner, CT Department of Energy & Environmental Protection (DEEP)**

Commissioner Dykes, opposes House Bill 5332 as currently written, though it supports the goals behind it and is willing to help revise it. She notes in **Section (1)** of the bill would ban extending limbs over the side of a vessel while it's operating. DEEP agrees this targets unsafe behavior on motorboats, but says the wording is too broad. It would unintentionally apply to non-motorized boats like kayaks, canoes, and sailboats, where such movements are necessary for safe operation. It could also restrict normal activities like docking, fishing, or rescuing someone. DEEP recommends limiting the rule to motorboats and adding exceptions for common, low-speed activities. **Section (2)** states increases penalties for abandoning

vessels and allows the state to recover cleanup and removal costs from the “last owner of record.” DEEP does not oppose higher fines, but raises two concerns:

1. The “last owner of record” may not be the actual person who abandoned the vessel, since registration isn’t required immediately after purchase.
2. The cost-recovery provision is unnecessary because existing law already allows recovery from the responsible party.

Overall, DEEP supports improving boating safety and addressing abandoned vessels but believes the bill needs revisions to avoid unintended consequences and legal issues.

## **NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:**

### **Sally Kruse, Executive Director, New Haven Port Authority**

Kruse, supports House Bill 5332, as she explains that abandoned vessels cause serious environmental and safety problems, including damage to marine habitats, pollution from oil and chemicals, marine debris, harm to wildlife, and hazards to navigation. The Port Authority believes the bill would help by: **Increasing fines**, which would discourage people from abandoning boats, and **allowing cost recovery from the last owner of record**, helping address cleanup costs and further deter abandonment.

### **Representative Al Paolillo, State of Connecticut, 97<sup>th</sup> Assembly District**

State Representative Al Paolillo supports House Bill 5332, citing frequent issues with abandoned boats in coastal communities like New Haven. He explains that abandoned vessels are a growing problem (over 50 reported in 2025), harming the environment, damaging property, creating pollution, and posing safety risks to people on the water. He supports the bill as a way to discourage abandonment, improve safety, protect the environment, and reduce costs for taxpayers and local governments.

### **Senator Heather Somers, State of Connecticut, 18<sup>th</sup> District**

Senator Heather Somers supports House Bill 5332 but requests an amendment to allow **dumping clean, untreated snow from docks into the water**. She argues this is environmentally responsible because: Snow from docks can be removed **before any salt or chemicals are applied**, making it clean and leaving snow on land leads to **polluted runoff** entering waterways later. She also emphasizes that: **Heavy snow can damage docks**, creating safety risks; Docks are vital to the **year-round fishing industry**; Repairs can be costly (up to \$30,000), burdening municipalities. Overall, the bill but urges adding an amendment to allow safe snow disposal from docks to protect infrastructure and reduce pollution.

### **Hon. Carmen Rodriguez, Alder-Ward 6, City of New Haven, Board of Alders**

Hon. Rodriguez supports the bill because she states that this legislation advances common-sense public safety measures while also strengthening accountability for conduct that imposes serious risks and costly burdens on municipalities. She highlights that in section 1, In a busy harbor environment, especially during peak recreational months, clear standards that reinforce safe boating practices help protect passengers, operators, and first responders. And in section 2, abandoned vessels are not simply nuisances; they can become hazards to navigation. They can create significant environmental risks as they deteriorate and potentially release fuel, oil, batteries, fiberglass debris, and other pollutants into coastal waters. Just as importantly, they can leave cities and taxpayers responsible for expensive removal and cleanup costs.

**The following members of the New Haven Yacht Club:**

The New Haven Yacht Club supports **Section 2 of Bill 5332**, which addresses abandoned vessels, but raises concerns about **Section 1**. They emphasize that abandoned boats are a serious problem, creating safety hazards for water users, causing environmental damage (like leaking fuel and debris), and placing financial burdens on municipalities and taxpayers. They cite a recent local example of a repeatedly abandoned sailboat that sank near their mooring area. They believe Section 2 would help by holding vessel owners accountable. However, they argue that Section 1—prohibiting extending limbs beyond a boat’s edge—could unintentionally penalize normal, safe boating practices, such as docking, handling lines, or managing sails. As written, it may lead to citations for routine seamanship.

**Ashley Moore, Treasurer**

**Stocky Clark, Vice Commodore**

**Cheryl Robin-Amendola, Secretary**

**Leland J. Moore, Board Member**

**Gary Cline, Member**

**Felix Graham-Jones, Member**

**4 citizens expressed support for this bill.**

**NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

**Anne Hannan, Past Commodore, Eastern CT Sailing Association**

Past Commodore Hannan opposes Section 1 of House Bill 5332, which would ban extending limbs over a boat’s edge. Hannan, argues that “hiking” (extending legs over the side) is a critical sailing technique used to maintain balance and control by counteracting wind forces on the sails. This is especially important in smaller boats without heavy keels, where crew body position is essential for stability and safe operation. They conclude that banning this practice would undermine safety and urge that hiking remain allowed as a necessary and standard sailing method.

**2 citizens expressed opposition to this bill.**

**Reported by: Luna Romani**

**Date: 03/19/2026**