



RBOC

Protecting your boating interests.

925 L Street • Suite 260
Sacramento CA 95814

www.rbo.org

FALL 2023

BOATER BRIEF

The Legislature recessed the first year of the 2023-2024 legislative session on September 14, sending several hundred measures to Governor Newsom for his signature or veto by an October 14 deadline. Here is an overview of the key issues, RBOC's engagement, and their status:

No 300% Boat Registration Increase - for Now

RBOC is pleased to report that the efforts of thousands of individual boaters, the boating community and industry, and our national advocacy partner BoatUS have saved California boaters from paying \$60 more in state boat registration fees that would have begun July 1 of this year.

The legislation establishing California's 2023-2024 fiscal year budget did not resolve the ongoing \$20 million annual deficiency in the Division of Boating and Waterways' Harbors and Watercraft Revolving Fund. The issue has not been finally resolved and the issue will be revisited in 2024 when the Legislature convenes the second year of the 2023-2024 legislative session.

More on this issue - Boaters will recall that RBOC has been advocating on this issue throughout the past two years and was very concerned when Governor Newsom's May Revise for the state budget fiscal year proposed an increase in vessel registration fees by even more than originally proposed,

for a 300% increase, without returning any more value to boaters, and ignoring the substantial \$107 million per year contribution boaters already pay via the state fuel tax.

As RBOC President Debrinia Madison Smith stressed: "This levy will create a financial barrier to healthy on-the-water opportunities for the average California boater, whose boat is under 25 feet in length, and even more so for individuals in disadvantaged communities or on fixed incomes."



The average boat owner in California has an income of less than \$70,000 per year, among those who are least able to afford the significant 300% increases in their registration fees. It will essentially make boating an activity that the average Californian family cannot afford.

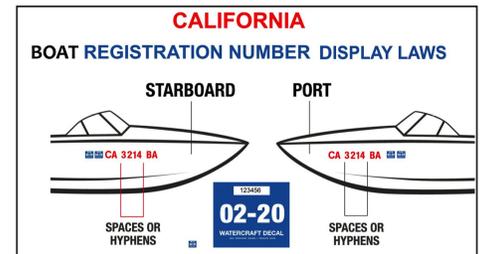
The number of registered vessels in California has already been decreasing. Several years ago, California ranked third in the number of registered boats by state, today the state is fifth. Local assessors have been drastically increasing the assessed value of vessels for local property tax purposes, regardless of their age. New marina developments are reducing the number of slips available for small boats. Boaters are being required to spend more money on less effective hull paints.

The hardship of quadrupling fees coupled with severely increased fuel costs will also decrease tax revenue from boaters that fuel boats and the vehicles that tow them off the water,

impact on the water or walkable restaurants accessed by boats, shopping by boaters who buy boating and camping equipment, and pay for repairs. Our communities will pay less fees for fishing and hunting, and fewer launches will decrease launch fees collected and place more hardships on marina owners.

In addition, the boating community is frustrated that a collaborative stakeholder-driven process was announced and rushed through, in part, with little notification to the boating community that engaged in good faith in this process, with little to no time to review, react, or discuss the elements of the proposal the Governor is putting forth and those that he is leaving off the table.

The May Revise did not implement key recommendations of the two-year stakeholder process. The revise did not increase efficiency by actions such as transferring boat registration functions from the state Department of Motor



Vehicles [DMV] to the Department of Boating and Waterways [DBW]. It did not improve transparency and accountability. RBOC remains committed to working with the Governor and Legislature to increase the opportunities for Californians to have equitable access to on-the-water opportunities.

Other Key Issues – Boater Funds & Speed Limits

RBOC's advocacy efforts this year have addressed other key issues as well:

1. Obtained a decision by the authors to not extend a law that directs a portion of boat registration fees to be sent to the California Air Resources Board for vehicle programs.

AB 241 [Reyes] and SB 84 [Gonzalez] would reauthorize fees the smog abatement fee, vehicle registration fee, and identification plate fee that fund the Air Quality Improvement Program, the Clean Transportation Program, and the Enhanced Fleet Modernization Program.

As amended in March both measures would have extended the \$10 biennial increase in vessel registration fees in Vehicle Code Section 9853.6 to assist in funding these vehicle programs.

RBOC appreciates the decision of the authors to remove these provisions on June 29 as the decision was made to proceed with AB 241. At this point, neither measure has passed the Legislature.

2. Worked together with the author of legislation to ensure that, consistent with the Assembly Member's intent, a proposed study of shoreline erosion would not be funded by boaters.

AB 966 [Davies] would direct the Division of Boating and Waterways in the Department of Parks and Recreation, in cooperation with the State Coastal Conservancy, to prepare and submit a joint report to the Legislature no later than January 1, 2025, on shoreline erosion control and public beach restoration programs.

The state's general fund would be the source of funding to implement the measure. State Parks

estimates one-time costs of about \$75,000 for a contract to develop the report, and the State Coastal Conservancy estimates one-time costs of about \$200,000 to conduct the study and produce a report.

The Governor's just vetoed this bill.

3. Engaged with the author and sponsors of a proposed voluntary speed limit along the coast so that it would not apply to boaters.

AB 953 [Connolly] would require the Ocean Protection Council to implement a statewide voluntary vessel speed reduction and sustainable shipping program.

RBOC brought to the attention of the author and sponsors that as originally introduced the provisions were not restricted to commercial vessels and the voluntary 10-knot voluntary speed limit would also apply to recreational vessels.

RBOC appreciates the author's May 18 amendment to the bill clarifying that the program would only apply to vessels that are 300 gross tons or greater. The measure has not yet passed the Legislature.

4. Closely followed legislation to establish a program to rid the waterways of abandoned commercial vessels so that it would not impact the existing and effective boater-supported program for abandoned and derelict recreational vessels.

AB 748 [Villapudua] would establish the California Abandoned and Derelict Commercial Vessel Program within the California Natural Resources Agency, to be administered by the State Lands Commission, to bring federal, state, and local agencies together to identify, prioritize, and, upon appropriation by the Legislature to fund the removal of abandoned and derelict commercial vessels and other debris from commercially

navigable waters.

The bill has passed the Legislature and is on the Governor's desk for his consideration.

Sacramento – San Joaquin Delta

RBOC continues to oppose the Delta Conveyance Project as planned, which even though revised to one tunnel, still would significantly impede navigation and harm Delta recreation. Another 15-20 year project that not only disrupts all uses of the waterways, but also overruns its budget, and may not finish on schedule or at all, is not the best answer.



The current planned project would severely disrupt navigation, boating-related commerce and communities throughout and after construction.

RBOC supports SB 687 [Eggman] that would require the State Water Resources Control Board to adopt a final update of the 1995 Water Quality Control Plan for the San Francisco Bay/Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Estuary before the State Water Board may consider a change in point diversion or any other water rights permit or order for the Delta Conveyance Project.

RBOC is concerned with the potential impacts of AB 1613 [Bains] that would require the Department of Water Resources to identify strategic locations in the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta where barriers could be constructed to combat salinity intrusion that would reduce the need to contaminate fresh water.

Neither of these bills has yet passed the Legislature.

Offshore Wind Energy

RBOC urges legislators and stakeholders to acknowledge and incorporate the protection of boating opportunities along California's coast as the state pursues offshore wind, with its vast energy potential, as a means to scale up renewable energy capacity and diversify the state's clean energy portfolio.

A number of governmental entities are making decisions to facilitate offshore wind energy. These include the California Energy Commission, California Public Utilities Commission, California Coastal Commission, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, and the state Legislature. Legislation includes:

▶ SB 122 [Skinner] specifies the intent of the Legislature that the Administration conduct an assessment of offshore wind energy permitting and related resources needs across applicable state entities, such as the Energy Commission, the State Lands Commission, the California Coastal Commission, and the State Coastal Conservancy; and states that the outcomes of the assessment may be considered as part of a future budget. This measure has been enacted.

▶ SB 286 [McGuire] would establish the California Offshore Wind Energy Fisheries Working Group to address offshore wind energy project impacts to certain fisheries and related interests. The working group would

develop a statewide strategy to minimize impacts to ocean fisheries and provide for reasonable compensation to those affected. The bill would also require the California Coastal Commission to process a consolidated coastal development permit for new development associated with offshore wind energy projects and related transmission facilities. This measure is on the Governor's desk for his consideration.

▶ AB 3 [Zbur] would establish the California Offshore Wind Advancement Act to develop a strategy for seaport readiness for offshore wind energy developments, and to study the feasibility of achieving 70% and 85% in-state assembly and manufacturing of offshore wind energy projects. This measure is on the Governor's desk for his consideration.

▶ AB 80 [Addis] would establish the West Coast Offshore Wind Science Entity to assess the environmental impacts of offshore wind energy development. This legislation has not yet passed the Legislature.

▶ AB 344 [Wood] would authorize electrical corporations, electric service providers, and community choice aggregators—collectively, load-serving entities (LSEs)—to jointly enter into agreements to procure electricity generated from offshore wind facilities. This measure has not yet passed the Legislature.



Please Contribute

Your contribution helps RBOC continue our professional advocacy and grassroots efforts that ensures we are able to continue to enjoy boating. Please contribute \$20 or more and become a Friend of RBOC. www.RBOC.org

Please note that, due to RBOC's extensive lobbying activities, contributions to our nonprofit advocacy organization are not tax deductible.



Be Informed

Make sure you are on our email list to receive updates and invitations - like the free town hall we provided boaters on June 28 on these and other issues. Sign up at: <https://www.rbo.org/email-sign-up>.



RBOC & BoatU.S. Boater Town Hall

Join us for a Virtual Town Hall Zoom Webinar

Wednesday, June 28, 2023
6:30 pm to 7:30 pm