Senate Bill 553
By: Senators Robertson of the 29th, Brass of the 28th, Jones of the 25th, Au of the 48th, Albers of the 56th and others

AS PASSED

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

To amend Article 1 of Chapter 7 of Title 52 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to general provisions of registration, operation, and sale of watercraft, so as to authorize any person 15 years of age or older to operate a Class 1, Class 2, or Class 3 vessel on any of the waters of this state if such person meets certain conditions pertaining to licensure, education, and accompaniment by an adult; to provide for related matters; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

SECTION 1.

Article 1 of Chapter 7 of Title 52 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to general provisions of registration, operation, and sale of watercraft, is amended by revising Code Section 52-7-8.3, relating to operation of watercraft, identification, and operation by minors, as follows:

"52-7-8.3. (a) A person 16 years of age or older may operate any vessel or personal watercraft on any of the waters of this state if such person has met the applicable requirements of Code Section 52-7-22, and such person has in such vessel proper identification."
(b) A person 15 years of age or older may operate a Class 1, Class 2, or Class 3 vessel on any of the waters of this state if such person:

   (1) Has in such vessel either proper identification or an instruction permit issued pursuant to subsection (a) of Code Section 40-5-24;

   (2) Is accompanied by an adult 18 years of age or older, in or on the vessel, who is authorized to operate such vessel under the provisions of subsection (a) of this Code section, and is ready and capable of taking immediate control of the vessel; and

   (3) Has met the applicable requirements of Code Section 52-7-22.

(c) A person 12 through 15 years of age may operate a personal watercraft or Class A vessel on any of the waters of this state in compliance with the provisions of this article if such person:

   (1) Is accompanied by an adult 18 years of age or older who is authorized to operate such vessel under the provisions of subsection (a) of this Code section; or

   (2) Has completed a boating education course approved by the department.

(d) No person between 12 through 14 years of age may operate a Class 1, Class 2, or Class 3 vessel.

(e) No person under the age of 12 years shall operate any Class 1, 2, or 3 vessel or any personal watercraft on any of the waters of this state, and no such person shall operate any Class A vessel utilizing mechanical means of propulsion exceeding 30 horsepower. Such person may operate a Class A vessel, other than a personal watercraft, utilizing mechanical means of propulsion not exceeding 30 horsepower only where such person is accompanied by an adult 18 years of age or older who is authorized to operate such vessel under the provisions of subsection (a) of this Code section.

(f) No person having ownership or control of a vessel shall permit another person to operate such vessel in violation of this Code section.

(g) No person shall rent, lease, or let for hire any vessel ten horsepower or more to any person under 16 years of age. On and after July 1, 2014, a person 16 years of age or older
may rent or lease any vessel ten horsepower or more if such person has completed a
boating education course approved by the department. This subsection shall not apply to
any person licensed by the United States Coast Guard as a master of a vessel or a
nonresident who has in his or her possession proof that he or she has completed a National
Association of State Boating Law Administrators approved boater education course or
equivalency examination from another state.

(g)(h) As used in this Code section, the term:

(1) 'Accompanied by' means in the physical presence within the vessel of a person who
is not under the influence of alcohol, toxic vapors, or drugs to a degree which would
constitute a violation of Code Section 52-7-12 were such person operating the vessel.

(2) 'Personal watercraft' shall have the same meaning as set forth in Code
Section 52-7-8.2.

(3) 'Proper identification' shall have the same meaning as in subsection (d) of Code
Section 3-3-23, relating to furnishing of alcoholic beverages."

SECTION 2.

All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act are repealed.