

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**

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

7 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:**

8 **SECTION 1.**

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

13 "52-7-8.3.

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

17 (b) A person 15 years of age or older may operate a Class 1, Class 2, or Class 3 vessel on  
18 any of the waters of this state if such person:

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

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

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

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

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

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

31 ~~(c)~~(d) No person between 12 through ~~15~~ 14 years of age may operate a Class 1, Class 2,  
32 or Class 3 vessel.

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

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

42 ~~(f)~~(g) No person shall rent, lease, or let for hire any vessel ten horsepower or more to any  
43 person under 16 years of age. On and after July 1, 2014, a person 16 years of age or older

44 may rent or lease any vessel ten horsepower or more if such person has completed a  
45 boating education course approved by the department. This subsection shall not apply to  
46 any person licensed by the United States Coast Guard as a master of a vessel or a  
47 nonresident who has in his or her possession proof that he or she has completed a National  
48 Association of State Boating Law Administrators approved boater education course or  
49 equivalency examination from another state.

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

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

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

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

58 **SECTION 2.**

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