



State of Wisconsin
2025 - 2026 LEGISLATURE

LRB-2994/1

ZDW:skw

2025 BILL

1 **AN ACT** *to create* 30.542 and 30.80 (7) of the statutes; **relating to:** prohibiting
2 abandonment of a boat and providing a penalty.

Analysis by the Legislative Reference Bureau

This bill prohibits a person from abandoning a boat on the waters of this state or upon adjacent riparian land. “Abandon” is defined to mean 1) leaving a boat unattended, without demonstrated intent to return to or moor or maintain the boat, for a period of more than seven consecutive days, or 2) leaving a boat that is partially submerged, in a state of disrepair, or otherwise neglected such that the boat presents a hazard to navigation, public safety, or environmental health and the owner has failed to take reasonable actions to remove or maintain the boat.

Under the bill, if a law enforcement officer determines that a boat has been abandoned, the officer must notify the owner, who must remove the boat within 30 days. If the boat remains abandoned after that period, the owner is subject to imprisonment for up to nine months and a fine of up to \$10,000, or both. In addition, the Department of Natural Resources shall require the person to obtain a certificate of satisfactory completion of a safety course before operating a boat.

The people of the state of Wisconsin, represented in senate and assembly, do enact as follows:

3 **SECTION 1.** 30.542 of the statutes is created to read:

BILL**SECTION 1**

1 **30.542 Abandonment of boat prohibited.** (1) In this section, “abandon”
2 means any of the following:

3 (a) Leaving a boat unattended, without demonstrated intent to return to or
4 moor or maintain the boat, for a period of more than 7 consecutive days.

5 (b) Leaving a boat that is partially submerged, in a state of disrepair, or
6 otherwise neglected such that the boat presents a hazard to navigation, public
7 safety, or environmental health and the owner has failed to take reasonable actions
8 to remove or maintain the boat after notice from the department or a local law
9 enforcement agency.

10 (2) No person may abandon a boat on the waters of this state or upon any
11 adjacent riparian land without the express consent of the landowner or the owner of
12 riparian rights.

13 (3) (a) If a law enforcement officer determines that a boat has been
14 abandoned, the officer shall issue a written notice to the last known owner of record
15 for the boat, if ascertainable, requiring the owner to remove the boat within 30 days
16 of receipt of the notice.

17 (b) If an owner fails to remove a boat subject to a notice under par. (a) within
18 the specified time, or if the owner cannot be identified, the department or a local
19 law enforcement agency may remove, impound, or dispose of the boat.

20 (c) Notwithstanding par. (b), if an abandoned boat presents a hazard to
21 navigation, public safety, or environmental health, the department or a local law
22 enforcement agency may remove, impound, or dispose of the boat immediately and
23 without providing notice.

24 (d) In addition to any penalties under s. 30.80 (7), any person violating sub. (2)

BILL**SECTION 1**

1 shall be liable for all costs incurred by the department or a local law enforcement
2 agency for the removal, storage, or disposal of the abandoned boat.

3 **SECTION 2.** 30.80 (7) of the statutes is created to read:

4 30.80 (7) (a) Any person violating s. 30.542 (2) and (3) (a) shall be subject to a
5 fine not to exceed \$10,000 or imprisonment not to exceed 9 months, or both.

6 (b) In addition to any penalties under par. (a), for any person violating s.
7 30.542 (2) and (3) (a), the department shall require the person to obtain a certificate
8 of satisfactory completion of a safety course under s. 30.74 (1). If the person has a
9 valid certificate at the time that the court imposes sentence under par. (a), the
10 department shall permanently revoke the certificate and order the person to obtain
11 a certificate of satisfactory completion of a safety course under s. 30.74 (1).

12 (END)