

CO-SPONSORSHIP MEMORANDUM

TO: All Legislators

FROM: Representative Shannon Zimmerman

Senator Rob Stafsholt

DATE: April 25, 2025

RE: Co-sponsorship of LRB-2030/2994 – relating to: prohibiting abandonment of a boat and providing a penalty.

DEADLINE: May 2, 2025

As the weather warms up, many Wisconsinites and travelers from other states choose to enjoy what our natural resources have to offer. This includes boating, fishing, swimming, and engaging in other water sports on the Badger State's elegant waterways. From the Great Lakes to the Mississippi River, Wisconsinites utilize our bodies of water responsibly so that our tourism industry thrives and so that future generations can enjoy them as well.

Unfortunately, there are those who do not respect our waterways. There are two recent examples of boats being left abandoned. In Western Wisconsin, a [54-foot motor yacht](#) was abandoned on an island in the St. Croix River last summer. At this time, the only effort made to remove the boat has been by a local resident who wanted to take action. Across the state in Eastern Wisconsin, [a boat](#) has been abandoned on Milwaukee's lakefront since October. An anonymous donor is now funding the effort to remove the boat.

When boats are left abandoned, they become eyesores for local communities. Worse, they become environmental risks as they deteriorate and rust. Any abandoned boat may be carrying fuel that can leak into a body of water. This legislation addresses the concerns of abandoned boats by requiring that the owner remove the boat within 30 days of the boat being determined to be abandoned. If it remains abandoned, then the owner will be subject to penalties and need to complete a certificate of satisfactory completion of a safety course before operating a boat.

If you are interested in co-sponsoring this legislation, please reply to this e-mail or contact Representative Zimmerman's office at 9130 or Senator Stafsholt's office at 6-

7745 by May 2, 2025 at 5:00 PM. Co-sponsors will be added to both the Assembly and Senate versions of the proposal unless specified otherwise.

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.