

FINAL BILL REPORT

EHB 1014

C 310 L 99

Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Requiring children age twelve and under to wear a personal flotation device while on a vessel on the waters of the state.

Sponsors: Representatives Carlson, Regala, Ogden, Pennington, Hatfield, Hurst, Stensen, Buck, Romero, Kastama, Scott, McIntire, Keiser, Cooper, Ballasiotes, Schual-Berke, Murray, Cody, Veloria, Rockefeller and Lantz.

House Committee on Natural Resources

Senate Committee on Natural Resources, Parks & Recreation

Background:

Generally, boaters must have a life jacket or other flotation device on board for each person on the vessel. (Flotation devices must be in serviceable condition, of appropriate size, and readily accessible.) The law does not require boaters to actually wear a flotation device. There are some exceptions to this general rule; for example, water skiers, personal watercraft users, and passengers on vessels carrying participants for hire on whitewater rivers all must wear personal flotation devices.

Summary:

No person is allowed to operate a vessel of 19 feet or less on the waters of the state with a child 12 years and under, unless the child is wearing a personal flotation device that meets or exceeds U.S. Coast Guard standards while the vessel is underway. Three exceptions are provided: 1) if the child is below deck or in the cabin of a boat; 2) if the vessel is an approved passenger-carrying vessel operating on the navigable waters of the United States; or 3) if the child is on board a vessel of a time and place where no person would reasonably expect a danger of drowning to occur.

Enforcement may be accomplished as a primary action and need not be in connection with a suspected violation of some other offense.

Votes on Final Passage:

House 63 33

Senate 33 12 (Senate amended)

House 61 35 (House concurred)

Effective: July 25, 1999