

House Bill 556

By: Representatives Cox of the 28th, Williams of the 148th, McDonald III of the 26th, Gunter of the 8th, and Powell of the 33rd

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

1 To amend Code Section 52-7-8.3 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to
2 operation of watercraft, identification, and operation by minors, so as to provide for boat
3 liveries and education courses; to provide for a penalty; to provide for definitions; to provide
4 for related matters; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

5 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

6 **SECTION 1.**

7 Code Section 52-7-8.3 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to operation of
8 watercraft, identification, and operation by minors, is amended by revising subsection (g) as
9 follows:

10 ~~“(g)(1) As used in this subsection, the term: No person shall rent, lease, or let for hire any~~
11 ~~vessel ten horsepower or more to any person under 16 years of age. On and after July 1,~~
12 ~~2014, a person 16 years of age or older may rent or lease any vessel ten horsepower or~~
13 ~~more if such person has completed a boating education course approved by the~~
14 ~~department. This subsection shall not apply to any person licensed by the United States~~
15 ~~Coast Guard as a master of a vessel or a nonresident who has in his or her possession~~
16 ~~proof that he or she has completed a National Association of State Boating Law~~

17 ~~Administrators approved boater education course or equivalency examination from~~
18 ~~another state.~~

19 (A) 'Boat livery' means a business which holds any vessel for renting, leasing, or
20 chartering.

21 (B) 'Course' means a rental education course as provided for in paragraph (3) of this
22 subsection.

23 (C) 'Person' means an individual, partnership, firm, corporation, association, or other
24 legal entity.

25 (2) A boat livery may not rent, lease, or let for hire any vessel ten horsepower or more
26 to any person under 16 years of age. A boat livery may rent, lease, or let for hire a vessel
27 ten horsepower or more to a person 16 years of age or older if such person, and one
28 additional person 16 years of age or older who will be present on such vessel, has
29 completed a rental education course approved by the department's Law Enforcement
30 Division and if all persons 16 years of age or older who intend to operate such vessel
31 have also completed a course.

32 (3) Rental education courses provided by boat liveries pursuant to paragraph (2) of this
33 subsection must be approved by the department's Law Enforcement Division and must
34 result in the issuance of a rental education certificate by such division upon successful
35 completion of the course. Rental education certificates shall be effective for six months
36 after the date of issuance and shall be valid anywhere in this state. Boat liveries may use
37 course materials either provided by or approved by the department. At a minimum, a
38 course must consist of a ten-minute operation familiarization video followed by a renter
39 orientation checklist. Such video must address the following topics in order to be
40 approved:

41 (A) Operator responsibility, ethics, courtesy, and good judgment on the water;

42 (B) Safety equipment;

43 (C) Navigation rules;

44 (D) Aids to navigation, and buoys and other waterway markers; and

45 (E) Proper identification.

46 (4) The requirement to complete a course does not apply to any person licensed by the
47 United States Coast Guard as a master of a vessel, any person who has in his or her
48 possession a valid boater education identification card showing that he or she has
49 completed a boating education course approved by the department's Law Enforcement
50 Division, or a nonresident who has in his or her possession proof that he or she has
51 completed a National Association of State Boating Law Administrators approved boater
52 education course or equivalency examination from another state.

53 (5) Any person who violates this subsection shall be guilty of a misdemeanor."

54 **SECTION 2.**

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