



Government Affairs
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March 19, 2021

Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety
Maine State House, Room 436
Maine Legislature
Augusta, ME

Re: LD 514, the Safe Disposal of Marine Flares Act

Dear Chairs Deschambaul and Warren,

On behalf of the Boat Owners Association of The United States (BoatU.S.), representing over 4,000 members in Maine, I am contacting you to voice support for LD 514, the Safe Disposal of Marine Flares Act.

Marine flares or other signaling devices are required safety equipment on most recreational boats. By federal regulations (33 CFR 175.101), all vessels greater than 16' in length must have some form of visual distress signal when operated on most coastal waters. Marine flares are one of the primary methods available to comply with this requirement. They play an important role in alerting the Coast Guard and other mariners of boats in distress, often helping to take the "search" out of search and rescue operations. But they also come with a downside.

Currently there is not a system that safely accepts and disposes of outdated flares. Because of this, expired marine flares continue to present a safety and storage hazard for boat owners. Due to the mandated 42-month expiration date from date of manufacture, most boaters need to replace their boat's emergency flares after three seasons of boating. In normal operation, flares can burn as high as 2,900 F, and they commonly contain perchlorates that are a groundwater contaminant and serious health hazard, making safe disposal of expired flares a priority.

As we understand it, this act would employ, on a voluntary basis, a network of local fire departments, marinas and municipalities, as well as groups that organize flare-disposal events to become collection points for the "timely pickup of the collected expired marine flares." It would also provide guidance on short-term storage of flares, develop a statewide education campaign, and require nonpolluting disposal of "all types of expired marine flares." The program would be readily accessible to recreational and commercial vessel operators.

BoatU.S. has long recognized the challenge of disposing of expired marine flares for boaters. This bill will help to solve this problem for the citizens of Maine in a responsible, practical way. The passage of this bill will make Maine a national leader on an issue that has frustrated boaters, government, and environmental advocates for decades.

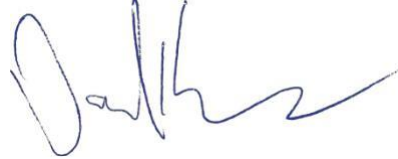
Recreational boaters have an abiding interest in the protection of our waterways and the safe operation of our vessels. They want to be able to responsibly dispose of these mandated devices but have not always had a clear method for doing so. Passage of LD 514 will be an important step in addressing this problem.

On behalf of the recreational boaters of Maine, we urge the Maine Legislature to move this bill forward to final passage.

With over 770,000 members nationwide, BoatU.S. represents the interests of recreational boaters throughout the United States.

Thank you for your consideration of our views. Please let us know if we can provide additional information on this or any other recreational boating matters at govtaffairs@boat.us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "D. Kennedy", with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

David Kennedy

BoatU.S. Government Affairs