

Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee

Joshua Schauer 271-3077

HB 1837-FN, relative to the New Hampshire marine patrol.

Hearing Date: March 31, 2026

Time Opened: 10:23 a.m.

Time Closed: 10:32 a.m.

Members of the Committee Present: Senators Avard, Pearl and Rosenwald

Members of the Committee Absent : Senators McConkey and Watters

Bill Analysis: This bill modifies boating laws by updating penalties, increasing mooring field fees, prohibiting certain operating practices, requiring vessel display standards, and removing specified safety provisions.

Sponsors:

Rep. J. MacDonald

Rep. Crawford

Rep. Hamblen

Rep. Peternel

Rep. Rung

Who supports the bill: Representative John Macdonald, Tim Dunleavy, Jodi Grimblas (NH Marine Patrol Association), Deborah Fexis

Who opposes the bill: N/A

Summary of testimony presented in support:

Representative John Macdonald, Carroll 6

- He introduced the bill, noting it was brought forward at the request of the Department of Safety. Explained that it is a cleanup measure addressing standardized fines, certain safety equipment requirements, and mooring fees.
- He added that Captain Dunleavy is available to answer any questions.

Timothy Dunleavy, Marine Patrol Captain at NH State Police

- He expressed support for the bill, noting that they worked with Rep. MacDonald to develop what he described as a “housekeeping” measure.
- He explained the change, on Line 9, requiring defendants to appear in person rather than online, noting that the previous process was burdensome for both the courts and those involved. The revision is intended to ease that burden for defendants and the judicial system.

- He pointed out that there is a boating safety provision and Discussed the issue of individuals hanging over the bow of a boat. He noted that current language places responsibility on the individual, often children, and the language change shifts responsibility to the vessel operator, which is considered more appropriate.
- On Page 2, Line 4, he explained that New Hampshire was out of compliance with federal law, and this provision has been added to align state law with existing federal requirements and current practice.
- He added that there is a full repeal of RSA 270:46-a and stated that this section is redundant and has created confusion, describing it as a “demonstrative nightmare,” and therefore recommended its repeal.

Senator Rosenwald asked whether the fines listed on page 1 of the bill go to the Navigation Safety Fund.

Mr. Dunleavy responded that only certain violations are directed to the Navigation Safety Fund. The majority of fines go directly to the General Fund.

Senator Rosenwald asked whether removing the requirement for boat safety courses would affect the Navigation Safety Fund or the General Fund, depending on where the fines go.

Mr. Dunleavy explained that it will not have any cost impact, because the funds are effectively returned and no fund is actually losing or gaining any money.

Senator Rosenwald said the general fund may see a benefit from roman numeral two in the bill.

Mr. Dunleavy said yes and in many ways will be a cost savings to the department and the courts.