

## Governor Christie Signs Legislation To Promote Safe Boating In New Jersey

Thursday, July 3, 2014

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**Trenton, NJ** – Governor Chris Christie today signed into law legislation aimed at increasing safe boating practices on New Jersey’s inland lakes and waterways. The bipartisan legislation increases the penalty for anyone leaving the scene of a boating accident in New Jersey waters or for failing to assist anyone injured in a boating-related accident as required by law. S-846 will raise the penalty to a second degree offense to leave the scene if the accident results in the death of anyone involved. Second degree offenses will now be punishable by a prison term of five to ten years, up to \$150,000 in fines, or both. New Jersey law currently requires the operator of a boat involved in an accident to stop the boat immediately and assist any injured parties as long as they can do so safely.

“With the summer season underway, New Jerseyans need to take all safety precautions into consideration as they enjoy recreational boating around the state,” said Governor Chris Christie. “Boating is about enjoying the summer and relaxing with your family and friends, but it also comes with a responsibility to the people you’re with and others on the water to be vigilant, responsible, and safe, and to help stop accidents from happening to begin with. This law will serve as another reminder to implement necessary practices to ensure the safety of everyone on the water.”

“Boats are powerful vehicles that can do tremendous damage if handled improperly. Following safe boating practices is crucial, especially on our busier waterways,” Senator Donald Norcross said. “Bad drivers should be treated equally, whether they’re on land or on water. This law makes sure that an offender who leaves the scene of any accident is held accountable for his or her actions.”

The Governor was joined for the bill signing by Bonnie Post, a victim of a boating related hit-and-run accident that resulted in the death of her husband. Since that tragedy, Mrs. Post has been an advocate for this legislation to increase penalties and accountability for boating-related accidents and to help similar tragedies from occurring to other people from reckless boating.

Last year, New Jersey experienced a slight increase in boating-related accidents - 126 compared with 124 in 2012. In addition, there were eight fatalities, a casualty rate consistent with the six to eight deaths seen annually on New Jersey waters since 2009. For 2014, there have been 36 accidents so far, with one fatality.

Additionally, with this legislation:

If the accident results in serious injury, leaving the scene would be considered a third degree crime punishable by three to five years in prison, a fine of up to \$15,000, or both;

In addition, there are increased penalties for failing to assist injured parties at the scene of the accident.

Penalties for a first offense are a fine of not less than \$200 or more than \$400, imprisonment for a period of not more than 30 days, or both.

For a subsequent offense, the penalty is a fine of not less than \$400 or more than \$600, imprisonment for a period of not less than 30 days or more than 90 days, or both.

Primary sponsors of S-846 include Senators Donald Norcross (D-Camden/Gloucester), James W. Holzapfel (R-

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Ocean), Assembly members Raj Mukherji (D-Hudson), David W. Wolfe (R-Ocean/Monmouth), Gregory P. McGuckin (R-Ocean), and Charles Mainor (D-Hudson).

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