

SENATE No. 2150

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

**In the One Hundred and Eighty-Ninth General Court
(2015-2016)**

SENATE, Monday, February 29, 2016

The committee on Revenue to whom was referred the petitions (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 343) of Bruce E. Tarr, Todd M. Smola, Joseph W. McGonagle, Jr., Paul R. Heroux and others for legislation relative to the modernization of boat registration and marine vessels; (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 1602) of Bruce E. Tarr for legislation relative to boat registration; (accompanied by bill, House, No. 2482) of Geoff Diehl relative to the excise tax on marine vessels; and (accompanied by bill, House, No. 2504) of Ann-Margaret Ferrante and others relative to the registration and taxation of marine vessels,- reports the accompanying bill (Senate, No. 2150).

For the committee,
Michael J. Rodrigues

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

**In the One Hundred and Eighty-Ninth General Court
(2015-2016)**

An Act relative to the modernization of boat registration and marine vessels.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Chapter 60B of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2014 Official
2 Edition, is hereby amended by striking out sections 1 through 6 and inserting in place thereof the
3 following new sections:-

4 Section 1. As used in this chapter, the following words shall, unless the context clearly
5 requires otherwise, have the following meanings:

6 “Director”, the director of the division of law enforcement of the department of fisheries,
7 wildlife and environmental law enforcement.

8 “Habitually moored or docked”, the place where the owner has usual mooring or dockage
9 during July and August for the summer season.

10 “Principally situated”, for a registered ship or vessel where it is registered, and for a non-
11 registered ship or vessel, whether documented or not, the city or town in Massachusetts where it
12 is principally located during the year.

13 “Vessel”, every watercraft, including documented boats and ships, used or capable of
14 being used as a means of transportation on water, and includes all equipment, including mode of
15 power, and furnishings that are normally required aboard the vessel during accomplishment of
16 the functions for which the vessel is being utilized.

17 Section 2. (a) Except as hereinafter provided there shall be assessed and levied by each
18 city and town in each fiscal year on every vessel, regardless of registration of origin and its
19 equipment, for the privilege of using the waterways of the commonwealth, an excise measured
20 by the value thereof, as hereinafter defined and determined, at the rate of \$10 per \$1000 of
21 valuation.

22 (b) Any person who owns such a vessel on July 1 shall annually, on or before September
23 1, make a return on oath to the assessors of the city or town where such vessel is habitually
24 moored or docked or in the case of a vessel which has no mooring or docking space, where said
25 vessel is principally situated, setting forth the vessel’s registration or documentation number, if
26 any; an adequate description, and the place of habitual mooring or docking or other principal
27 location of said vessel.

28 (c) For the purpose of computing the excise under this chapter, the value of each vessel,
29 and its equipment, including any engine or motor used to propel said vessel, shall be deemed to
30 be the fair cash value as determined by the assessors of each city and town, but not in excess of
31 the following values:-

32 Valuation of vessels

33 Length of vessel Under 4 yrs of age 4 thru 6 years of age 7 years or more

34	Under 16'	\$1,000	\$700	\$400
35	16 feet but not less than 17.5'	\$1,500	\$1,000	\$800
36	17.5' but not less than 20'	\$3,000	\$2,000	\$1,500
37	20' feet but less than 22.5'	\$5,000	\$3,300	\$2,500
38	22.5' but less than 25'	\$7,500	\$5,000	\$3,800
39	25' but less than 27.5'	\$10,500	\$7,000	\$5,300
40	27.5' but less than 30'	\$14,000	\$9,300	\$7,000
41	30' but less than 35'	\$18,500	\$12,300	\$9,300
42	35' but less than 40'	\$24,000	\$16,000	\$12,000
43	40' but less than 50'	\$31,500	\$21,000	\$15,800
44	50' but less than 60'	\$41,000	\$27,300	\$20,500
45	60' or over	\$50,000	\$33,000	\$24,800

46 Length of vessel shall mean overall center line length excluding bowsprits, boomkins
47 and similar extensions.

48 (d) The payment of such excise shall exempt such owner from any other tax applicable to
49 said vessels and their equipment under chapter 59.

50 (e) If an owner fails to make such a return within the time herein provided, the assessors
51 may abate the tax otherwise imposed by this chapter if such owner provides the assessors with a

52 reasonable excuse for failure to file such return and if the return is filed on or before October 31
53 of the year in which the tax is assessed; but no abatement hereunder shall reduce the tax
54 otherwise imposed to an amount less than the sum of the excise imposed by this section plus 50
55 per cent thereof.

56 (f) Said excise shall be assessed in the city or town where the vessel is habitually moored
57 or docked, or in the case of a ship or vessel which has no mooring or docking space, where the
58 ship or vessel is principally situated; provided, however, that if more than 1 municipality owns
59 property in a harbor, the municipality which maintains such harbor in which the vessel is
60 habitually moored, docked or situated shall assess and collect said excise; and provided, further,
61 that where more than 1 municipality maintains portions of the harbor, the municipality which
62 maintains that portion of the harbor in which the vessel is habitually moored, docked or situated
63 shall assess and collect said excise.

64 (g) Nothing in this section shall be construed to prevent the board of assessors from
65 granting an abatement in any case in which the excise aforesaid is, in the opinion of the board,
66 excessive. No abatement under this section shall reduce any excise to less than \$5; no abatement
67 shall be granted in an amount less than \$5 and no refund shall be paid in an amount less than \$5.

68 (h) If during any fiscal year ownership of a vessel subject to an excise under this chapter
69 is transferred by sale or otherwise and the registration of such vessel is surrendered, or if during
70 any fiscal year the owner of a vessel subject to such an excise removes to another state and
71 registers a vessel in such other state and surrenders or does not renew his registration in this
72 state, the excise under this chapter shall be reduced, upon application, by an abatement equal to
73 the proportion of an excise under this chapter on such vessel for the full fiscal year which the

74 number of months in said year remaining after the month in which such transfer by sale or
75 otherwise or such surrender or expiration of registration occurs bears to 12.

76 (i) All sums received from the excise imposed under this chapter shall be paid into the
77 treasury of the city or town and 50 per cent of said excise shall be credited to the municipal
78 waterways improvement and maintenance fund established under section 5G of chapter 40.

79 Section 3. The excise imposed by this chapter shall not apply to vessels described in
80 section 8 of chapter 59 and in section 67 of chapter 63; to vessels owned by the commonwealth
81 or any political subdivision thereof; to law enforcement vessels; to vessels under construction; to
82 ferries; to boats, fishing gear and nets, to the extent of the first \$75,000 in value thereof, owned
83 and actually used by the owner in the prosecution of his business if engaged in commercial
84 fishing and if no less than 50 per cent of his income is from commercial fishing; nor to other
85 vessels with a value of \$1,000 or less. Said exemptions shall not subject said vessels and their
86 equipment to any other tax under chapter 59.

87 Section 4. The board of assessors, upon assessing the excise imposed by this chapter,
88 shall commit the same to the collector of taxes with their warrant for the collection thereof. The
89 collector of taxes shall seasonably notify the owner of the excise assessed and the due date, but
90 failure to receive notice shall not affect the validity of the excise. Said excise shall be due and
91 payable at the expiration of 60 days from the date upon which the notice was issued by the
92 collector pursuant to this chapter.

93 Failure to pay said excise by the due date shall result in a penalty being imposed which
94 shall be equal to \$20 or 20 per cent of the amount of the excise due, whichever is greater. The
95 penalty shall be in addition to the amount of excise due and any interest thereon imposed by law.

96 If said excise remains unpaid after the due date, the harbormaster of a city or town shall refuse to
97 allow the vessel to moor, dock, or otherwise be situated within the waterways of said city or
98 town. All sums received from said penalty shall be credited to the municipal waterways
99 improvement and maintenance fund established under section 5G of chapter 40.

100 Section 5. The provisions of law relative to the collection, payment, abatement,
101 verification and administration of the motor vehicle excise imposed under chapter 60A shall so
102 far as pertinent apply to the excise imposed under this chapter.

103 Section 5A. No owner of a vessel shall be issued a registration decal or certificate of
104 number, or renewal of such decal or certificate, under sections 2A and 3 of chapter 90B unless
105 the owner has included with the application for such decal or certificate proof of payment of the
106 full amount of the excise assessed for the prior fiscal year for any vessel for which the owner has
107 a decal or certificate on July 1 of such year. Upon failure of the applicant to provide such proof
108 of payment, or receipt of such other notice of non-payment made by the local tax collector that
109 the director may determine, the director shall place the matter on record and not issue or renew a
110 registration decal or certificate of number for any vessel owned by the person to whom the
111 unpaid excise tax was assessed until after notice from the local tax collector that the matter has
112 been disposed of in accordance with law. The provisions of section 2A of chapter 60A shall
113 apply to any notifications of non-payment made by the local tax collector.

114 Section 6. The director shall annually, on or before October 1, transmit to the board of
115 assessors of each city and town a list of all ships or vessels which were documented or registered
116 on the immediately preceding July 1. The list shall include for each vessel, the name and
117 residential address of the owner, if an individual, or name and principal place of business, if a

118 corporation, partnership or other entity, the city or town in which the vessel is habitually moored
119 or docked, the name of the manufacturer, the year of manufacture as designated by the
120 manufacturer, the model type, the length, the horsepower of the engine or motor used to propel
121 the vessel, the document number or certificate of number and the value as determined by the
122 commissioner. The director may require from the owner such information as may be necessary
123 for purposes of this chapter.

124 SECTION 2. Chapter 90B of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2010 Official
125 Edition, is hereby amended by inserting after section 2 the following section:-

126 Section 2A. The owner of a vessel, which has a valid marine document issued by the
127 Bureau of Customs of the United States or any federal agency successor thereto and is
128 homeported in the commonwealth or maintained in commonwealth waters by a resident of the
129 commonwealth, shall apply to the director on a form prescribed him for a registration decal or
130 renewal thereof. The application shall be signed by the owner of the vessel and submitted to the
131 director together with a fee, as determined annually by the commissioner of administration under
132 the provision of section 3B of chapter 7.

133 The registration decal shall be displayed, so as to be visible to any law enforcement
134 officer, on the upper left section of the transom while facing the transom.

135 Registration decal information for such documented vessels shall be maintained by the
136 department and transmitted to the board of assessors of each city and town for the purposes of
137 assessing the excise imposed by chapter 60B.

138 This section shall not apply to owners of vessels documented for commercial use.

139 SECTION 3. Section 3 of Chapter 90B of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2010
140 Official Edition, is hereby amended by adding the following subsection:-

141 (1) Registration information for such motorboats shall be maintained by the department
142 and transmitted to the board of assessors of each city and town for the purposes of assessing the
143 excise imposed by chapter 60B.

144 SECTION 4. This act shall apply to excises assessed for any fiscal year beginning on or
145 after July 1, 2016.