

My name is Gary Lash. I am a member of the Newport Waterfront Commission and I'm writing in support of RIH 7892, a bill that will allow municipalities to control houseboats within their harbors. I have been very active in events within Newport Harbor since 1974. I was in charge of numerous non-racing activities surrounding the America's Cup in 1974 and 1977. I was on the Board of Tall Ships '76 which brought many tall ships from around the world to RI. I am a past Commodore of the Ida Lewis Yacht Club. I have been involved in numerous regattas in Newport and distance races that start or finish there. I conceived the idea and wrote the proposal to DEM (then Natural Resources) to build the sailing center at Ft. Adams that is now Sail Newport. Upon completion of the sailing center Newport hosted the 1980 US Olympic Sailing Trials. I am well aware of the economic impact transient boaters and regatta participants have upon Newport and the State. There is no ongoing activity within RI that generates the worldwide publicity that yachting in Newport does.

I'm concerned that houseboats will take up space on moorings and alongside floats and piers that are needed for transient boats and regatta participants. Newport now has a problem with how to inspect the existing houseboats within the harbor for fire, safety and illegal discharge. The existing houseboats are being used as short term transient lodging facilities, competing with land based lodging facilities but not paying the required City and State fees associated with this type of business. I have seen nowhere in the US where a harbor with a number of houseboats also has an active boating community and regatta schedule. I certainly realize that all harbors are different. This is why RIH 7892 allows each Municipality to control the proliferation of houseboats. What Newport wants its harbor to look like and what's agreeable to Providence will certainly be different. Please pass RIH 7892 and allow Newport to continue to maintain its world famous harbor in a way that allows it to be called the Yachting Capital of the World. Thank you.

Gary Lash