



# SENATOR MATT BARTLE

**District 8** – Capitol Building, Room 319 Jefferson City, MO 65101

**Column for Week of:  
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## **Keeping You Safe on Missouri's Waterways**

June 20 marks the first day of summer and with it comes baseball games, fireworks, BBQs and of course, summer vacations. While many families may travel across the country, many will also stay close to home and visit one of Missouri's fantastic lakes that offer visitors natural beauty, relaxation and adventure.

In the past, Missouri has not been known for its water safety, and in particular, the Lake of the Ozarks has gained some notoriety over the years. According to U.S. Coast Guard data gathered from 1995 to 2004, the Lake of the Ozarks is the third-most dangerous waterway in the country — behind only the Atlantic Ocean and the Colorado River.

While the number of boating accidents on all of Missouri's waterways was at a 20-year low in 2007, all of the deaths that year were alcohol-related. During sobriety checkpoints conducted in 2006, the Water Patrol found that in some areas, an average of one in six nighttime boat operators was intoxicated. These horrible statistics have raised concerns about how we can keep people safe when they visit Missouri's lakes.

This year the Legislature passed a bill that should help increase safety on our waterways. This legislation, [HB 1715](#), strengthens several regulations relating to watercraft operation in Missouri, primarily with regard to alcohol consumption policies. The biggest change for boat and jet-ski drivers will be the lowering of the current .10 blood alcohol content (BAC) limit to .08. Anyone with a BAC above .08 commits the crime of operating a vessel with excessive BAC, making it the same threshold applied to Missouri motorists.

The bill also applies a universal speed limit of 30 mph for watercraft between sunset and sunrise on any body of water. It also toughens the charges for those who operate a watercraft with criminal negligence when their actions cause the death of any person. Because HB 1715 contains an emergency clause, it will go into effect immediately upon the governor's signature.

Visiting any of Missouri's lakes and rivers is a time-honored tradition for many families in our area, and we want the experience to be safe and enjoyable for everyone. The protections put in place this year will help to keep families safe this busy vacation season. Enjoy the outdoor recreation that Missouri has to offer and have a great, safe summer.

If you have any comments or questions about this week's column or any other matter involving state government, please do not hesitate to contact me. You can reach my office by e-mail at [matt\\_bartle@senate.mo.gov](mailto:matt_bartle@senate.mo.gov) or by phone at (888) 711-9278. My web address is <http://www.senate.mo.gov/bartle>.

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