

VT Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Energy: Wake Boat Statement
5/4/25 Paul Zaloom

My name is Paul Zaloom; I'm a 73-year-old open water swimmer who has owned a summer camp on Woodbury Lake in north central Vermont for over 40 years. I also frequently swim in Parker, Shadow, and Caspian, three of the 30 lakes that currently allow wake boats under the 500-foot regulation.

When I swim hard for 45 to 60 minutes, I tow a swim buoy, stay close to shore, and pay as much attention to boat traffic as I can. None of these measures will help me or any swimmer recover from a silent and unexpected 3 to 4-foot wave. In a wake boat's enhanced-wave mode, when heavy ballast weighs down the stern and causes the bow to rise, the forward vision of the boat operator is blocked from seeing swimmers in their path! Obviously, we open water swimmers are at significant risk, to put it mildly.

It's clearly unjust that open water swimmers, kayakers, canoers, and children splashing around have less rights to a safe lake experience than a wake boater. Because of the modest size and depth of Vermont's inland lakes, wake boats should logically be restricted to the state's two large and deep international bodies of water – Champlain and Memphremagog – in order to protect the vast majority of Vermont residents who reasonably expect a safe recreational experience.

It's hard not to wonder if this change will happen only after a kayaker or swimmer or child drowns. I implore you to act now before someone perishes.

Thank you for listening.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Zaloom". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.