



## ISSUE BRIEF

### Seek appropriate application of new Coast Guard licensing for operators of Uninspected Passenger Vessels

**Our Position:** A change in enforcement by the U.S. Coast Guard regarding federal navigable waters boat licensing based on standards established for larger commercial boat operations on major bodies of water, would have an immediate negative impact on Minnesota fishing guides, tour boat operators, and casual boat/ pontoon rides offered through commercial businesses such as resorts. The MRCA supports licensing and oversight to ensure public safety on Minnesota's lakes and rivers, but believes these regulations to be overly burdensome and inappropriate for most Minnesota resorts. The MRCA supports changes in federal statute to reflect a more realistic picture, and in the short term, supports the continued use of discretion in enforcement of the existing licensing requirements.

**Background:** Minnesota's tourism industry supports licensing and oversight to ensure public safety on Minnesota's lakes and rivers. The state has over 500 guides who take anglers on inland navigable waters and hundreds of resorts and businesses that offer casual boat/pontoon rides to their guests.

However, the U.S. Coast Guard qualifications for licensing of an Operator of an Uninspected Passenger Vessel (or "Six-Pack") was not designed for most inland lakes or rivers nor for small vessels such as 16-20 foot outboard boats. For the past several decades, the Coast Guard has exercised discretion in its enforcement of the "Six-Pack" licensing.

### Public Policy Landscape

1. In the near term, we encourage the continued use of discretion in pro-active enforcement of the existing licensing requirements for an Operator of an Uninspected Passenger Vessel
2. Interim enforcement should address safety issues without penalizing small vessel operators for issues that do not relate to inland lakes
3. The U.S. Coast Guard should review standards including knowledge, cost and time commitment to develop licensing appropriate to smaller vessels operating on inland waters
4. Minnesota's Congressional delegation should oversee timely action on this issue.