



**To: House Committee on Federal and State Affairs
Representative Tom Kessler, Chair
Re: Verbal Proponent Testimony for HB 2687**

I am writing as the Executive Director of the Seaplane Pilots Association to provide proponent testimony for House Bill 2687. I want to express my strong support for the bill, which would ensure seaplanes are afforded the same unrestricted access to Kansas public waterways as other user groups enjoy.

Seaplane pilots are highly qualified to operate safely and responsibly on Kansas waterways. Every seaplane pilot receives formal, federally specified initial and proficiency training, is federally certificated, and is legally bound to stringent operating standards, much more so than other waterway users. Our members strive to be good neighbors, blending safely with other users. When on the water seaplanes abide by U.S. Coast Guard rules of the road for powered vessels. We strive to be the best possible stewards of the waterways, working cooperatively with officials responsible for ensuring proper regulatory use and environmental protection of waterways.

Let me briefly describe a typical seaplane flight to emphasize the high degree of planning, evaluation, situational awareness and operational safety that is involved on a routine basis. It begins with research to confirm that the waterway is open and accessible and that weather conditions are favorable. Prior to taking off or landing the pilot surveys the area to determine wind speed and direction, available landing and takeoff sites and distances, and possible hazards including swimmers, boaters, and floating and submerged objects. If there is a question about any one of the factors being evaluated the pilot will either select a safer area or opt to not land or take off. The majority of our pilots also are boat owners and operators, thus have greater insight on how to safely and responsibly share the waterways.

Historical records of accidents and incidents on public waterways confirm the excellent safety record of seaplanes on the water when compared with other user groups. It is clear from any perspective that seaplanes present an extremely small risk to the general public and to boaters in regards to sharing Kansas waterways.

In areas across the country where seaplanes are welcomed, economic benefits have followed. For example, Tavares, a lakefront town in central Florida, has staked its economy on seaplane tourism by building extensive facilities for recreational and commercial seaplane operators and hosting splash-ins and other events. The many residents and visitors who attend the events patronize local restaurants, hotels and other businesses. The strategy has worked, and now Tavares officially calls itself "America's Seaplane City." Welcoming seaplanes to Kansas lakes could inspire similar entrepreneurship by businesses and communities.

I offer my services and the services of the Seaplane Pilots Association to work with all Kansas legislators, stakeholders, regulators, policymakers and the general public to answer any questions and address any concerns about seaplane pilots, aircraft, and operations. We stand ready to help Kansas lead the way in opening its waterways to seaplanes, and reaping the many benefits that will ensue.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide verbal testimony on behalf of HB 2687. I look forward to our community creating a successful long-term relationship with all of your Kansas constituents.

Blue skies & calm waters,

Steve McCaughey
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