

THE FLORIDA SENATE
2025 SUMMARY OF LEGISLATION PASSED
Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

CS/SB 164 — Vessel Accountability

by Environment and Natural Resources Committee and Senator Rodriguez

The bill amends and creates statutes concerning vessel ownership, nuisance and derelict vessels, and anchoring and mooring practices.

The bill clarifies and expands the definition of a “vessel owner.” For vessels at risk of becoming derelict, the bill provides that if the owner or operator is present on the vessel, a law enforcement officer can immediately conduct a test of the vessel’s effective means of propulsion for safe navigation. The bill provides that a vessel will be declared a public nuisance if it is found to be at risk of becoming derelict three times within a 24-month period.

The bill creates a free long-term anchoring permit for vessel owners or operators who intend to anchor a vessel within one linear nautical mile of an anchorage point for 14 days or more within a 30-day period.

Regarding civil and criminal penalties, the bill:

- Adds violations relating to expired registration and long-term anchoring to the list of noncriminal violations that may be enforced by a uniform boating citation.
- Provides penalties for long-term anchoring violations.
- Increases penalties for subsequent violations of derelict vessel laws and makes residing or dwelling on a derelict vessel a criminal offense.

The bill also expands the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission’s existing local government grant program to support the derelict vessel prevention and voluntary turn-in program.

Except as otherwise provided in the bill, if approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor’s signature, these provisions take effect July 1, 2025.

Vote: Senate 37-0; House 113-0