

“Brianna’s Law,” Developed by Israel and Lieneck Family, Will Require Coast Guard to Outline Plan for Implementing Minimum Boating Proficiency Standards

Washington, DC— U.S. Congressman Steve Israel (D-NY) announced today that legislation named for an eleven year-old Long Island girl who lost her life in a 2005 boating collision in the Great South Bay, will be considered on the House floor as part of the Coast Guard Authorization for Fiscal Year 2008. “Brianna’s Law,” boating safety legislation Congressman Israel developed alongside family members of Brianna Lieneck, will require the Coast Guard to develop a plan to implement minimum education standards for recreational boat operators.

“Instead of retreating into understandable grief, the Lieneck family and their friends have dedicated themselves to making our public waters safe,” said Congressman Israel. “Brianna’s Law is a result of their tireless dedication and will require that the Coast Guard develop a plan to implement minimum education standards.”

“We worked on this legislation with Congressman Israel as one way to honor Brianna’s memory,” said Gina Lieneck, Brianna’s mother. “It is our hope that Brianna’s Law will prevent the tragedy our family faced from happening to other families.”

On August 17, 2005, Brianna Lieneck was killed in a tragic boating collision. “Brianna’s Law,” named in her memory, would require the Coast Guard to submit to Congress within six months a model plan for implementation of federal education standards for boat operators. The legislation was developed after Congressman Israel and the Lieneck family met with a Coast Guard Rear Admiral responsible for emergency response in Israel’s Washington, DC office.

In 2006, the last available year for which statistics are available, the number of boating death and injuries increased for the second year in a row. According to the U.S. Coast Guard, boating collisions in 2006 claimed 710 lives and cause 3,474 injuries. Seventy percent of reported fatalities occurred when a boat operator had not received boating safety instruction.

Currently, there is no federal standard for boating safety among recreational operators. States may voluntarily adopt licensing standards or boating safety courses, but these standards vary greatly across the United States. In New York, an individual must be at least ten years old to operate a boat with adult supervision or 18 years old without supervision. Individuals between the ages of 10 and 17 must complete an approved Boating Safety course in order to operate a boat or personal watercraft. Once an individual reaches the age of 18, he/she is encouraged but not required to take a boating class. Recreational boats in New York must be registered but do not have to be licensed.

“Brianna’s Law” mandates that the Coast Guard develop a plan to establish mandatory boater education for all states and report back to Congress within 6 months. In 2006, the state of New Jersey implemented mandatory boating safety courses for all recreational boat operators. The

Coast Guard has estimated that this cut down the number of deaths in half in their study area of Sandy Hook, NJ.