

115TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 619

To amend title 46, United States Code, to exempt old vessels that only operate within inland waterways from the fire-retardant materials requirement if the owners of such vessels make annual structural alterations to at least 10 percent of the areas of the vessels that are not constructed of fire-retardant materials and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JANUARY 24, 2017

Mr. CHABOT (for himself, Mr. CLAY, Mr. BLUM, Mr. SMITH of Missouri, Mr. WENSTRUP, Mr. SANFORD, Mr. RENACCI, Mr. COHEN, and Mr. JOHNSON of Ohio) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

A BILL

To amend title 46, United States Code, to exempt old vessels that only operate within inland waterways from the fire-retardant materials requirement if the owners of such vessels make annual structural alterations to at least 10 percent of the areas of the vessels that are not constructed of fire-retardant materials and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

1 **SECTION 1. FIRE-RETARDANT MATERIALS EXEMPTION.**

2 Section 3503 of title 46, United States Code, is
3 amended to read as follows:

4 **“§ 3503. Fire-retardant materials**

5 “(a)(1) A passenger vessel of the United States hav-
6 ing berth or stateroom accommodations for at least 50
7 passengers shall be granted a certificate of inspection only
8 if—

9 “(A) the vessel is constructed of fire-retardant
10 materials; and

11 “(B) the vessel—

12 “(i) is operating engines, boilers, main
13 electrical distribution panels, fuel tanks, oil
14 tanks, and generators that meet current Coast
15 Guard regulations;

16 “(ii) is operating boilers and main elec-
17 trical generators that are contained within non-
18 combustible enclosures equipped with fire sup-
19 pression systems; and

20 “(iii) has multiple forms of egress off the
21 vessel’s bow and stern.

22 “(2) Before December 1, 2028, this section does not
23 apply to any vessel in operation before January 1, 1968,
24 and operating only within the Boundary Line.

25 “(b)(1) When a vessel is exempted from the fire-re-
26 tardant standards of subsection (a)—

1 “(A) the owner or managing operator of the
2 vessel shall—

3 “(i) notify in writing prospective pas-
4 sengers, prior to the sale of any ticket for
5 boarding and to be affirmatively recognized by
6 such passenger prior to purchase, and any crew
7 member that the vessel does not comply with
8 applicable fire safety standards due primarily to
9 the wooden construction of passenger berthing
10 areas; and

11 “(ii) display in clearly legible font promi-
12 nently throughout the vessel, including in each
13 state room the following: ‘THIS VESSEL
14 FAILS TO COMPLY WITH SAFETY
15 RULES AND REGULATIONS OF THE U.S.
16 COAST GUARD.’;

17 “(B) the owner or managing operator of the
18 vessel—

19 “(i) may not disclaim liability to a pas-
20 senger or crew member for death, injury, or any
21 other loss caused by fire due to the negligence
22 of the owner or managing operator; and

23 “(ii) shall acquire prior to entering service,
24 and maintain, liability insurance in an amount

1 to be prescribed by the Federal Maritime Com-
2 mission;

3 “(C) the penalties provided in section 3504(c)
4 of this title apply to a violation of this subsection;

5 “(D) the owner or managing operator of the
6 vessel shall—

7 “(i) make annual structural alteration to
8 not less than 10 percent of the areas of the ves-
9 sel that are not constructed of fire retardant
10 materials;

11 “(ii) prioritize alterations in galleys, engi-
12 neering areas of the vessel, including all spaces
13 and compartments containing, or adjacent to
14 spaces and compartments containing, engines,
15 boilers, main electrical distribution panels, fuel
16 tanks, oil tanks, and generators;

17 “(iii) ensure, to the satisfaction of the
18 Coast Guard, that the combustible fire-load has
19 been reduced pursuant to clause (i) during each
20 annual inspection for certification; and

21 “(iv) provide advance notice to the Coast
22 Guard regarding the structural alterations
23 made pursuant to clause (i) and comply with
24 any noncombustible material requirements pre-
25 scribed by the Coast Guard;

1 “(E) the Coast Guard, in making the deter-
2 mination required in subparagraph (D)(iii), shall
3 consider, to the extent practicable, the goal of pres-
4 ervation of the historic integrity of the vessel in
5 areas carrying or accessible to passengers or gen-
6 erally visible to the public;

7 “(F) the owner or managing operator of the
8 vessel shall annually notify all ports of call and State
9 emergency management offices of jurisdiction that
10 the vessel does not comply with applicable fire safety
11 standards due primarily to the wooden construction
12 of passenger berthing areas;

13 “(G) the crews manning such vessel shall re-
14 ceive specialized training, above minimum standards,
15 in regards to shipboard firefighting that is special-
16 ized for exempted vessels and approved by the Coast
17 Guard; and

18 “(H) the owner or managing operator of the
19 vessel shall, to the extent practicable, take all steps
20 to retain previously trained crew knowledgeable of
21 such vessel or to hire crew trained in operations
22 aboard exempted vessels.

23 “(2) The Secretary shall conduct an annual audit and
24 inspection of any vessel exempted from the fire-retardant
25 standards of subsection (a).

1 “(c) The Secretary shall prescribe regulations to
2 carry out this section. Such regulations shall include the
3 manner in which prospective passengers are to be notified.

4 “(d) In addition to other penalties permitted by law,
5 the Secretary is authorized to immediately withdraw a cer-
6 tificate of inspection for a passenger vessel that does not
7 comply with any requirement under this section.”.

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