



## BOATS AND POLITICS

*Shall the two mix, or more like oil and water?*

*by Charlie Levine, BWI President*

Want to talk about the election? I know, me either. The country is suffering election fatigue, no matter what side of the aisle you're on. But this election cycle was unlike any we've ever seen. I won't bore you with any details that I'm sure you're well aware of. I'll leave that to the talking heads on cable news, but there is a burning question that I wanted to throw out there: Should we cover politically charged events in the boating press?

If you know me personally, you know my political leanings. I tend to wear my opinions on my sleeve, but I don't post about it on social media. I've made that mistake before and I've gotten into too many wars of words with grammar school friends and distant relatives. I don't have the energy for that anymore.

Like it or not, politics plays a big role in boating. Marine conservation, fisheries, public access, EPA mandates, luxury taxes, emissions requirements, policing, labor laws... all of these items and many, many more have the potential to change laws related to boating and the activities we enjoy while out on the water. It's important to stay up on the issues and report back to

your readers so they are aware and can get involved. That stuff is all fair game.

But when it comes to writing about a political party, politician or candidate, the waters get very muddy, very quickly, even if you stay completely neutral. Case in point: A few issues back, Dan Harding, the Editor-in-Chief of *Power & Motoryacht* (and my boss), attended a Trump boat rally in Rhode Island. These boat parades or rallies or whatever you want to call them, were a phenomenon we hadn't seen in the boating world. Born in Florida, the on-water gatherings quickly gained momentum around the country, from coastal areas to landlocked lakes. People were using their boats as political tools, but no boating magazines had actually reported on what it was like to attend one.

The edit staff at *Power & Motoryacht* talked about covering the rally, the potential fallout and the safety issues with the pandemic. After much discussion, Dan decided to roll the dice. He left all of his political leanings back at the dock and put on his reporter's hat. He spoke to boaters, interviewed the organizer, asked the USCG about safety issues and wrote about his experience. The mostly photo-driven news item did



not lean one way or the other, but it garnered a lot of attention.

We received a record number of letters, some of which were supportive and some of which were nasty. Name calling. Foul language. Even a few subscription cancellations. Yes, it was risky, but it was also newsworthy. After all, without risk there is no reward. If we are going to be journalists, we have to report on the world around us. Be fair. Be accurate. And don't kowtow to the forces looking to sway your coverage. At least that's my take.

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# BWI WRITING CONTEST LAUNCHES FOR 2020

BWI's Annual Writing Contest marks its 28th year to recognize exceptional creativity in boating journalism, photography and videography. Entries are being accepted in 15 categories which translates to \$15,000 available in prize awards. All of the details are included on [BWI.org](http://BWI.org). The [electronic entry form](#) provides the process for uploading entries, "doing the paperwork," and paying dues by check or PayPal or through a publisher.

BWI members get two free entries; non-members can enter at \$50 a piece (or join for \$100 and get the two free entries). Entries in all categories are welcome in a digital-only format -- including blogs and on-line videos -- or traditional print sources. Category definitions are included in the contest brochure.

The contest recognizes the best marine writing and imaging in the world and presents cash awards to first- (\$500), second- (\$300) and third-place (\$200) scorers in each category. Each year, the awards are presented at the Miami International Boat Show during the BWI Annual Meeting in February 2020. This year will be different with a virtual format. Deadline for entries is December 31, 2019.



## CANDIDATES SOUGHT FOR BWI BOARD

Elections for BWI Directors will be held in mid-January 2021. Three to four seats (that carry three-year terms) are coming open. Active and Associate members may run for Directors spots, and active and associate members will be asked to vote in the election. Those who think they'd like to serve are encouraged to run. Duties include participation in two in-person director meetings per year (no expenses paid), usually held in conjunction with Miami and Ft. Lauderdale boat shows, availability for as-needed conference calls (2-4 per year), committee work to help BWI grow, and serving as a BWI Writing Contest category chair, etc. For more information, contact Zuzana Prochazka [newbwiinfo@gmail.com](mailto:newbwiinfo@gmail.com).

Candidates need to provide a brief summary (100 words), by December 20, of their experience, qualifications and ideas to help BWI grow. Summaries are reviewed by the nominating committee which consists of the current President, Immediate Past President and Executive Director. These are provided to the members along with the ballot when voting commences in January.

## MEMBER NEWS

### VOLVO PENTA RETIRES SEVEN MARINE

Three years post their acquisition of the outboard manufacturer, Seven Marine, Volvo Penta has decided to retire the entire line to better meet their target of becoming a net-zero emissions operation. The two founding brothers of Seven Marine left the organization earlier this year and now that Volvo is accelerating its sustainability projects, the entire line will be phased out. The Swedish engine builder will focus on fossil-free, renewable fuels and electric and hybrid technology. Volvo's new president, Helene Mellquist stated, "...we believe that the indisputable need to drive advancements in sustainable technology must be our main focus."



# BOATUS, STAKEHOLDERS ASK FCC TO RECONSIDER APPROVAL OF WIRELESS PLAN

As reported in this BWI Journal in July, BoatUS is fighting to keep GPS safe and available. The battle continued last week with a letter sent by a coalition of groups whose users rely on GPS and who want the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to change its mind about an [April 20 decision to permit Ligado Networks](#) to begin construction of a land-based industrial 5G “L-Band” wireless network. The group is concerned that once operable, the network will negatively impact the reliability of the nation’s GPS.

The letter was signed by 78 GPS stakeholder groups (including the [Keep GPS Working Coalition](#) and [Boat Owners Association of the United States \(BoatUS\)](#)) to US Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee Chair Robert Wicker (R-MS) and Ranking Member Maria Cantwell (D-WA), legislators urged to reverse the [Ligado Order](#). It requests “direct involvement to protect the satellite communications and GPS services that are relied on by tens of millions of Americans every day.”

## SEATOW FOUNDATION EXPANDS LIFE JACKET LOANING PROGRAM STATIONS

As part of a grant administered via the USCG Sportfish Restoration & Boating Trust Fund, [SeaTow’s foundation](#) [received funding](#) to expand its life jacket loaner stations to at least 50. Part of the effort will also restock existing station for the 2021 boating season. Companies or families interested in receiving life jackets or adding a loaner station can complete an application which will be accepted until February 1, 2021.



## CHANGES AT BRUNSWICK CORPORATION

Brunswick, parent company of two BWI Supporting Members (Mercury Marine and Boston Whaler) has appointed John Oenick as director, enterprise electrification. To focus on the company’s Autonomy, Connectivity, Electrification & Shared Access (ACES) initiative, the 18-year veteran of John Deere will focus on the enterprise technology strategy that supports electrification solutions. Another 20 employees have been hired recently to support the effort.

Additionally, Brunswick launched a consumer advisory board to advise on and shape the next generation of boating. Rpl, as the board is named, will “bring together diverse boating perspectives to collaborate on topics aimed at driving retention among new boaters and increasing appeal and access to boating for all.”





# CALENDAR & EVENTS

## Updates on Winter Boat Shows

Here's the latest but remember, the only constant is change.

### Miami Boat Show

Canceled for February 2021.

[Miamiboatshow.com](http://Miamiboatshow.com)

### Minneapolis Boat Show

Cancelled for January 2021.

[Minneapolisboatshow.com](http://Minneapolisboatshow.com)

### St. Petersburg Power & Sailboat

In person, now Jan. 14-17, 2021.

[Stpeteboatshow.com](http://Stpeteboatshow.com)

### Seattle Boat Show

Now a virtual event - Jan. 28-31.

[Seattleboatshow.com](http://Seattleboatshow.com)

### Boat & Fun Berlin

Now a virtual event - Nov. 19-22.

[Boot-berlin.com](http://Boot-berlin.com)

### Boot Dusseldorf

The world's largest indoor boat show, which welcomes 250,000 attendees annually, is still scheduled as a live event for January 2021.

[Boot.com](http://Boot.com)

### International Workboat Show

Canceled for 2020.

[Workboatshow.com](http://Workboatshow.com)

## A Quick Look Back at FLIBS 2020...



Photo By: Mike Stocker / South Florida Sun Sentinel

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The BWI Journal is produced by and for members of Boating Writers International and can be found at [www.bwi.org](http://www.bwi.org). Send items to be considered for publication to Zuzana Prochazka, [info@bwi.org](mailto:info@bwi.org). All information contained herein is meant for the use of members, is in their best interest, and appears in as true and accurate a form as possible. Membership in BWI is open to anyone involved in the recreational boating industry. Active members are generally writers, editors, photographers, videographers and broadcasters. Associate members are generally PR or communications firms. Supporting members are usually manufacturers or marine organizations.