

119TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

H. R. 9650

To amend title 18, United States Code, to establish a crime for altering, removing, or affixing unauthorized vessel identification numbers and trafficking certain vessels, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JULY 13, 2026

Mr. EZELL (for himself and Mr. CARBAJAL) introduced the following bill;
which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary

A BILL

To amend title 18, United States Code, to establish a crime for altering, removing, or affixing unauthorized vessel identification numbers and trafficking certain vessels, 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,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Vessel Identification
5 Protection Act of 2026”.

1 **SEC. 2. UNAUTHORIZED VESSEL IDENTIFICATION NUM-**
2 **BERS.**

3 (a) IN GENERAL.—Chapter 25 of title 18, United
4 States Code, is amended by inserting after section 507 the
5 following:

6 **“§ 507A. Altering, removing, or affixing unauthorized**
7 **vessel identification numbers**

8 “(a) IN GENERAL.—With respect to a vessel or vessel
9 part in or affecting interstate commerce, no person shall
10 knowingly, with the purpose of obscuring the identity of
11 a vessel or vessel part—

12 “(1) remove, obliterate, tamper with, forge,
13 counterfeit, alter, or obstruct the visibility of—

14 “(A) a hull identification number;

15 “(B) an identification number; or

16 “(C) a decal or device affixed to a vessel
17 or vessel part; or

18 “(2) affix—

19 “(A) a hull identification number or an
20 identification number that has not been issued
21 by the appropriate manufacturer, importer,
22 State authority, or Federal authority to a vessel
23 or vessel part; or

24 “(B) a decal or device that has not been
25 issued by the appropriate manufacturer, im-
26 porter, State authority, or Federal authority

1 pursuant to chapters 41, 43 or 123 of title 46,
2 United States Code, or regulations issued there-
3 under.

4 “(b) NONAPPLICATION.—Subsection (a) shall not
5 apply to the removal of an identification number by a per-
6 son who is—

7 “(1) authorized to remove the identification
8 number by the United States Coast Guard; or

9 “(2) required to remove the identification num-
10 ber pursuant to Coast Guard regulations.

11 “(c) PENALTY.—Whoever violates subsection (a)
12 shall be fined under this title, imprisoned not more than
13 5 years, or both.

14 “(d) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

15 “(1) HULL IDENTIFICATION NUMBER.—The
16 term ‘hull identification number’ has the meaning
17 given such term in section 187.7 of title 33, Code
18 of Federal Regulations (as in effect on the date of
19 enactment of this Act).

20 “(2) IDENTIFICATION NUMBER.—The term
21 ‘identification number’ means a number or symbol
22 that is inscribed or affixed for purposes of identifica-
23 tion under chapter 41, 43, or 123 of title 46, United
24 States Code, or regulations issued thereunder.

1 “(3) TAMPERS WITH.—The term ‘tampers with’
 2 includes covering a decal or device affixed to a vessel
 3 pursuant to chapters 41, 43, and 123 of title 46,
 4 United States Code, or regulations issued there-
 5 under.

6 “(4) VESSEL.—The term ‘vessel’ has the mean-
 7 ing given such term in section 115 of title 46,
 8 United States Code.”.

9 (b) TRAFFICKING IN CERTAIN VESSELS.—Chapter
 10 113 of title 18, United States Code, is amended by insert-
 11 ing after section 2321 the following:

12 **“§ 2321A. Trafficking in certain vessels**

13 “(a) IN GENERAL.—Whoever buys, receives, pos-
 14 sesses, or obtains control of, with intent to sell or other-
 15 wise dispose of, a vessel in or affecting interstate com-
 16 merce, knowing that an identification number or hull iden-
 17 tification number for such vessel has been removed, oblit-
 18 erated, tampered with, forged, counterfeited, altered, or
 19 not issued by the appropriate manufacturer, importer,
 20 State or Federal authority shall be fined under this title
 21 or imprisoned not more than 10 years, or both.

22 “(b) NONAPPLICATION.—Subsection (a) does not
 23 apply if the removal, obliteration, tampering, or alter-
 24 ation—

25 “(1) is caused by collision, allision, or fire; or

1 “(2) is not a violation of section 507A of this
2 title.

3 “(c) IDENTIFICATION NUMBER.—In this section, the
4 terms ‘identification number’, ‘hull identification number’,
5 and ‘vessel’ have the meaning given such terms in section
6 507A of this title.”.

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