



Illinois General Assembly

May 7, 2020

The Honorable J.B. Pritzker
Governor, State of Illinois
100 W. Randolph
JRTC- Suite 16-100
Chicago, IL 60601-3220

Dear Governor Pritzker:

On May 5, you presented your “Restore Illinois” plan to the residents of Illinois. I could go into the many concerns I have about your plan, but in this letter, I hope to address what I believe may be simple oversights on your part.

Legislators have received a multitude of questions and concerns about the closure of campgrounds and the guidelines drafted for fishing & boating. As you and I both have stated before publicly, social distancing guidelines do not preclude enjoying outdoor recreation- the benefits of which contribute significantly to the mental and emotional wellness of Illinoisans in the communities we represent. As the weather improves and you continue to ask us to follow your lead, I ask that you give us the outlets to exercise and engage in recreational opportunities that improve the well-being and promote a positive quality of life.

Illinois taxpayers have spent billions of dollars to enjoy natural recreational areas through camping and boating. To address camping first— several campgrounds around the state allow for natural privacy and social distancing. Many also have public pools, community shelters and playgrounds for their patrons. Allow for the camping sites to be open for overnight stays, just as hotels, bed-and-breakfasts, and inns are open, but set guidelines to discourage the opening of the communal areas where it may be more difficult to practice the social distancing and density recommendations.

Boating —the two-person rule fails to recognize best safety practices for boaters that have children or have taken their aging parents for a ride in the sloughs or our rivers. Indeed, in some instances, “physical safety best practices” for boating recommend more than two boaters. Those boating with a young child or an aging family members or friend must always be vigilant of possible emergencies and an exit plan for their excursion on the water. It is not an uncommon occurrence on the Mississippi or

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Rock Rivers to hit a stump and get tossed from a boat, even under proper safety protocols. It is not uncommon in some parts of our State for a boater to be knocked off their boat by an invasive Asian Carp leaping into the air and knocking a boater in their head, as well. If a boater has a medical issue of any kind and requires CPR, a third boater can provide relief in administering CPR or drive the boat to a safe place for proper medical attention to reach the boater in distress. Further, if the second boater is a minor, they may not be able to drive the boat to safety to provide help for their distressed companion. This outcome of a 2-person limit merits further review and correction based on safety concerns alone regardless of the common-sense arguments of a family who reside together in an enclosed environment not being able to boat together on open-water.

State Conservation Police Officers are on duty and capable of protecting the safety of our residents. We encourage postings about social distancing and giving residents the tools to practice the best safety guidelines.

Please re-consider your decision, with safety, family fun, and common-sense as your guide in this matter. Please open our campgrounds and allow for families to boat together.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tony M. McCombie". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Rep. Tony McCombie