

# FINAL BILL REPORT

## SB 5192

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### C 39 L 23

#### Synopsis as Enacted

**Brief Description:** Authorizing administrative law judges to substitute for pollution control hearings board members in deciding derelict vessel appeals.

**Sponsors:** Senators Shewmake, Hunt, Nguyen and Wellman; by request of Environmental and Land Use Hearings Office.

**Senate Committee on Agriculture, Water, Natural Resources & Parks**  
**House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources**

**Background:** Derelict Vessel Removal Program. The Derelict Vessel Removal Program (DVRP) is administered by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Under the DVRP, certain public entities, including DNR and most public agencies that own or manage aquatic lands, may take custody and dispose of abandoned or derelict vessels on aquatic lands within their jurisdiction. The owner of an abandoned or derelict vessel is responsible for the cost of removal and disposal of the vessel.

Any owner of a vessel that has been seized under the DVRP may request a hearing before the Pollution Control Hearings Board (PCHB) to appeal either the seizure or the amount of reimbursement owed to the agency that removed the vessel.

Pollution Control Hearings Board. The PCHB is an administrative body that hears and decides appeals from state and local governmental agencies on a wide variety of environmental permits and penalty orders. The PCHB is administered by the Environmental and Land Use Hearings Office (ELUHO), and has three members, all of whom are appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate for staggered six-year terms. One of the three PCHB members must be an attorney.

An appeal brought under the DVRP, whether to challenge the seizure of a vessel or the amount of reimbursement owed to the agency that removed the vessel, may be heard by one member of the PCHB, whose decision is the final decision of the PCHB. For appeals that involve a derelict or abandoned vessel only, an administrative law judge employed by the

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

PCHB may be substituted for a PCHB member.

Administrative Law Judges. Administrative law judges preside over administrative hearings and issue written orders affirming, modifying, or reversing agency decisions. The ELUHO employs administrative law judges to facilitate a wide range of administrative processes. The Director of ELUHO may appoint administrative law judges to serve on cases before the PCHB.

**Summary:** The PCHB may substitute an administrative law judge employed for a PCHB member to hear DVRP appeals to challenge the seizure of a vessel or the amount of reimbursement owed to the agency that removed the vessel.

**Votes on Final Passage:**

Senate	47	0
House	96	0

**Effective:** July 23, 2023