

Local Boater Option credentials can make travel in the Caribbean more convenient

ADMIRALTY LAW FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

boater number given to an individual applicant. It can not be done by a master or another agent for that person. Individual participants in the program must be either U.S. citizens or permanent legal residents of the United States.

Also, the Local Boater Option program is only available to those properly registered on board private, non-commercial vessels, who are not paying for the voyage.

And, finally, it must be remembered that the vessel's master and/or owner remains responsible for following either the program's guidelines, or deal with any nonconformities in a manner acceptable to CBP.

This means if the vessel's master intends to take full advantage of the Local Boater Option upon reentry, it should be confirmed before the voyage begins that everyone on board is a properly registered participant.

In the event only some of the voyagers are properly registered, they will probably be allowed to leave the vessel without further inconvenience upon reentry. However, travelers without a boater registration number will be required to report for the old fashioned face to face meeting with immigration officials — and it remains the boat's master/owner's responsibility to make sure that these guidelines are met.

Finally, remember that failure of a master to meet U.S. Custom and Immigration guidelines can result in heavy fines and even confiscation of the vessel.

Despite these limitations, the Local Boater Option can make boating in South Florida and the Caribbean a little more convenient and accessible.

Hopefully, some boaters can still afford the fuel to

take advantage of it!

Mark Ercolin is a maritime attorney based in Fort Lauderdale. The information offered in this column is summary in nature and should not be applied to specific cases or situations.

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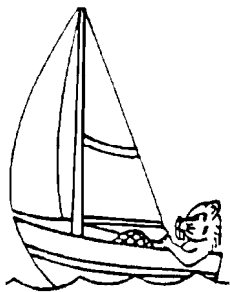
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