

ASSEMBLY TOURISM, GAMING AND THE ARTS
COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

ASSEMBLY JOINT RESOLUTION No. 59

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: JUNE 1, 2026

The Assembly Tourism, Gaming and the Arts Committee reports favorably Assembly Joint Resolution No. 59.

This joint resolution declares May 15 of each year as “Water Safety Day” in the State of New Jersey to raise public awareness of best practices in accident and injury prevention around bodies of water. The Red Cross specifies water competence as maintaining awareness of water conditions, knowing physical limitations, and never swimming alone.

When practiced safely, water activities may encourage healthy development, improved confidence, and collective wellbeing. Drowning, a consequence of unsafe aquatic behavior, is the second leading cause of death for children ages five to 14, and a leading cause for ages one to 17. More children ages one through four die from drowning than from any other cause, except birth defects. Drowning results in over 4,000 unintentional fatalities each year and accounts for an estimated \$53 billion in direct and indirect costs. For each child who dies from drowning, another eight receive emergency room care for non-fatal water related injuries. These nonfatal drownings can cause a number of long-term, significant cognitive and motor skill impairments.

Victims of drowning are disproportionately individuals of color, and 45 percent of Hispanic children and 64 percent of African-American children lack the ability to swim. Forty-six percent of parents of children ages four through 17, 39 percent of African-Americans, 61 percent of men, and 42 percent of women say they can perform basic water skills. Seventy-nine percent of children in households with incomes under \$50,000 have limited or no ability to swim.

Other states have enacted legislation to recognize water injury prevention and the role that aquatic activities play in good physical health, mental health, and quality of life. Tennessee and Georgia have issued proclamations to respect Water Safety Month. Washington, too, has enacted “Yori’s Law,” designating May 15 as Water Safety Day in the State. May 15 is National and International water safety day, committed to raise awareness about water safety and the importance of public education regarding safe water practices.

It is in the best interest of this State – as a diverse and coastal environment – to acknowledge the importance of water competence with this commemorative day.

This bill was pre-filed for introduction in the 2026-2027 session pending technical review. As reported, the bill includes the changes required by technical review, which has been performed.