Boat safety bills clear the Senate

to \$300 a year. The bill parallels a law covering auto mechanics. The second by Sen. Richard Fessler have cleared the Michigan Senate and are on their way to the House of Representatives.

"Tragically, there have been 11 boating fatalities already this season," Fessler said. "We cart go on letting people think that operating one requires no skills or responsibility whatsor er.

The bills are:

• SB 5 — require licensing of morboat mechanics. The Serverary of State would test and license mechanics, charging fees ranging from \$550

AP — Michigan reporters would gain new protections against law-sults when reporting about public documents and proceedings, under a bill approved by the state House. The House voted \$2.11 to change the standard for determining whether a private critizen was libeled because of a report on an issue of public interest. House Bill 4932, sponsored by Rep. William Bryant Jr., R-Grosse Pointe Farms, now goes to the state Senate.

Senate.
It was supported by all Observer
Eccentric lawmakers except two
who didn't vote — Mat Dunaskiss, D-Lake Orion, and William Keith, D-Garden City.

argen City. It calls for the libel standard to be It calls for the libel standard to be mallee, knowledge that a statement was false, or reckless disregard for whether it was false. THE BILL was sought by the state's media outlets after a 1986 state Supreme Court ruling lowered

the standard to negligence in a rul-ing against The Battle Creek Enquir-

Libel protection bill OK'd

Media representatives argued that the court's new standard left jour-nalists unsure whether they are pro-tected from lawsuits when reporting on the official actions and reports of government agencies. They argued that it was ridiculous for a reporter to be sued for libel for reporting the contents of an inaccu-rate government report.

BUT REP. William Van Regen-morter cautioned the bill would give reporters the freedom to quote re-ports without checking their accura-

Van Regenmorter, R-Jenison, said he was particularly concerned about the media's reporting the contents of juvenile records, recently made pub-lic by the Legislature. He said a juvenile record, for ex-ample, could list a child's descrip-

Pet Owners!

tion of one parent's extramaritial affals, even if the information were incorrect.

"As long as a report says something, the media can report it, and report it, and report and the product of the produc

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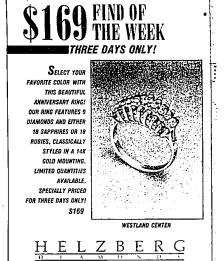
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