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# California State Senate



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## LEGISLATION TARGETING CRUISE SHIP CRIME AND POLLUTION PASSES FIRST TEST

**SACRAMENTO** – Legislation aimed at curbing cruise ship crime and pollution passed its first hurdle today — with flying colors. On a bipartisan 5-0 vote, the Senate Public Safety Committee approved State Senator Joe Simitian’s Senate Bill 1582, legislation that protects the public, enhances homeland security and ensures compliance with laws banning offshore dumping of cruise ship waste. The measure requires that every cruise ship entering and exiting a California port have a qualified Ocean Ranger on board.

“There’s a gaping hole in the system,” said Simitian. “We’ve got air marshals on planes with a couple hundred passengers, but we’ve got no one on board a cruise ship with ten times the number of passengers. That makes no sense whatsoever.”

Simitian’s Senate Bill 1582 requires that an Ocean Ranger (a licensed marine engineer and certified peace officer) be present on all cruise ships sailing in California waters. Simitian’s long term goal, he said, is to create a seamless network of protection from one end of the Pacific Coast to the other through a series of agreements with other Pacific states (Alaska, Washington, Oregon and Hawaii).

“Congressional testimony, accounts in the press and industry statistics all suggest a serious public safety concern, and an industry response which has been too often wanting. The presence of qualified, objective and independent law enforcement personnel on cruise ships addresses those concerns,” Simitian said.

While cruise ships typically carry their own private security, there is no recourse to a bona fide law enforcement official in the event of an on-board crime. “On-board security works for the cruise line – not for the passengers and not for the public. There’s an inherent conflict of interest between the public relations goals of the employer and the public safety requirements of the passenger,” said Simitian.

Cruise lines maintain that they are not legally obligated to investigate crimes, nor are they required to have the necessary technical expertise or crime laboratory to do so. But to successfully investigate alleged crimes and missing passengers, the cases must be promptly reported to law enforcement authorities. All too often, the end result is significant delays before authorities are notified, jurisdictional ambiguity and a lack of necessary tools to put the pieces together and solve these cases.

“Too many passengers are telling us that in the aftermath of an unhappy or even tragic experience, the industry’s official response is “See no evil. Hear no evil. Speak no evil,” Simitian noted. “Disinterest and denial are common complaints.”

“I testified today because I don’t want anyone else to ever have to live through what I’ve been through. This is a simple, common sense protection that would do a lot to make cruise ship travel a safer bet,” said Laurie Dishman, a victim of cruise ship crime and recently named the 2008 Eva Murillo Unsung Hero by the Victims’ Caucus of the United States House of Representatives

“I am extremely pleased by the Committee’s actions. The time has come for this milestone legislation — there’s a serious problem,” said Kendall Carver, President of International Cruise Victims and the father of Merrian Carver who disappeared from a 2004 cruise to Alaska.

“SB 1582 is also designed to enhance existing environmental protections. California can be proud that we have some of the toughest anti-dumping laws in the nation to prevent cruise ships from dumping their waste along our coast. I authored a number of those laws; and, to his credit, Governor Schwarzenegger signed them into law,” said Simitian. “But a law on the books is only as good as the enforcement and compliance that back it up,” Simitian said. “And as things now stand, there is no enforcement. The industry self-monitors and self reports. With an on-board Ocean Ranger, we can make sure that compliance and coastal protection are real.”

Gershon Cohen, Project Director of the Campaign to Safeguard America’s Waters said, “SB 1582 is an important next step towards protecting our waters from cruise ship-generated pollution.”

To learn more about SB 1582, please visit [www.senatorsimitian.com](http://www.senatorsimitian.com)

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