

CSAW
Campaign to Safeguard America's Waters



Earth Island Institute

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California Ocean Ranger Bill Sails Through Senate

In a remarkable show of bipartisan support, the California Senate on Tuesday passed Senate Bill 1582 over to the Assembly by a 25-12 vote. The California "Ocean Ranger" bill is modeled after the Alaska Ocean Ranger program passed by CSAW and Responsible Cruising in Alaska in a statewide initiative in Alaska in 2006. It will require all cruise ships visiting California ports to have on board independent marine engineers monitoring compliance with California's zero-discharge pollution rule for large cruise ships, and public safety officers protecting passengers from the epidemic of assaults, rapes, and suspected homicides plaguing the industry.

The bill, sponsored by the Earth Island Institute and International Cruise Victims organizations was introduced by Democrat Joe Simitian and Republican Abel Maldonado.

The Ocean Ranger program will require a Coast Guard licensed marine engineer to be on every vessel, trained to monitor cruise ship wastewater discharge practices, ensure treatment equipment is properly operated and maintained and review discharge logs required under federal law. After the vote on Tuesday, Gershon Cohen Ph.D., Project Director of CSAW, explained why this is necessary: "The cruise industry has been convicted for numerous pollution-related felonies in recent years and received major fines for dumping wastes into public waters as well as falsifying documents submitted to the Coast Guard. They have a poor record of self-policing their environmental performance and continue to circumvent prudent environmental practices to increase profits. California's coastal waters, and the people and industries that depend upon them, are too important to trust to an industry with their record of environmental crimes." California's current zero-discharge law for cruise ship discharges does not provide independent oversight of the industry or verification of the zero-discharge requirement.

S.B.1582 will also place public safety officers on board the vessels to deter and investigate crimes against U.S. citizens. According to Ken Carver, President of ICV and the father of Merrian Carver who never returned from a cruise in 2004, "...the industry has failed to adopt measures to protect passengers from theft, rape, and "disappearance" or provide necessary assistance to U.S. officers investigating these crimes." The public safety Ocean Ranger will oversee the potential entry of thousands of aliens onto American soil and work with other U.S. agencies to protect America from possible acts of terrorism.

The bill was summed up this way by Senator Simitian: "The Ocean Ranger program, funded by a \$3/passenger maximum fee, will have no negative impact whatsoever on the industry or their ability to operate in California. We have a responsibility to protect our citizens and the environment, and this bill accomplishes these goals without burdening California's taxpayers or ports of call. With on-board Ocean Rangers we can make sure passengers are safe and our coastal waters are protected."

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