

110TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. RES. 652

Expressing the sense of Congress regarding the importance of protecting American cruise ship passengers against crimes on the high seas and ensuring that the perpetrators of such crimes are brought to justice.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SEPTEMBER 17, 2007

Ms. MATSUI (for herself, Mr. SHAYS, Mrs. MALONEY of New York, Mr. ARCURI, Mrs. CAPPs, Mr. COHEN, Mr. DOGGETT, Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas, Ms. ZOE LOFGREN of California, Mr. POE, Ms. SUTTON, Mr. THOMPSON of California, Mr. TOWNS, Mr. KENNEDY, Mrs. BOYDA of Kansas, Ms. WATSON, Mr. NEAL of Massachusetts, Mr. FILNER, Mr. CARTER, Mr. BERRY, Ms. SLAUGHTER, Mr. CARDOZA, and Mr. MCGOVERN) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, and in addition to the Committee on the Judiciary, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

RESOLUTION

Expressing the sense of Congress regarding the importance of protecting American cruise ship passengers against crimes on the high seas and ensuring that the perpetrators of such crimes are brought to justice.

Whereas there are approximately 200 overnight ocean-going cruise ships worldwide, and the average such ship carries 2,000 passengers as well as a crew of 950 people;

Whereas approximately 12,000,000 passengers are projected to take a cruise worldwide in the year 2007 alone;

Whereas few vacationing passengers on cruise liners fully appreciate their potential vulnerability to crime while on an ocean voyage, and those who are victimized often do not know their legal rights or who to contact for help in the immediate aftermath of the crime;

Whereas sexual violence, the disappearance of passengers from vessels on the high seas, and other serious crimes have occurred during luxury cruises on numerous occasions, as evidenced by the congressional testimony of the President of the International Cruise Victims Association, Kendall Carver, and Ms. Laurie Dishman during a March 27, 2007 hearing before the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the House of Representatives;

Whereas crimes at sea can involve attacks by both passengers and crewmembers on other passengers and crewmembers;

Whereas no Federal statute or regulation explicitly requires cruise lines to report alleged crimes to United States Government officials unless such crimes occur within the territorial waters of the United States;

Whereas it is not known precisely how often crimes occur on cruise ships or exactly how many people have disappeared during ocean voyages because cruise line companies do not make comprehensive, crime-related data readily available to the public;

Whereas obtaining reliable crime-related cruise data from governmental sources can be difficult, because multiple countries may be involved when crime occurs on the high seas, including the flag country for the vessel, the coun-

try of citizenship of particular passengers, and any countries having special or maritime jurisdiction;

Whereas due to the absence of law enforcement officials on ocean voyages, it can be difficult or impossible for criminal investigators to immediately secure an alleged crime scene on a cruise ship, recover evidence of an onboard offense, and identify or interview potential witnesses to the alleged crime;

Whereas the adequate collection and preservation of evidence relating to a crime on the high seas frequently depends upon the ability and willingness of cruise officials to manage an alleged crime scene, identify possible witnesses, and provide aid to the victim until law enforcement officials arrive on the ship;

Whereas most cruise ships that operate into and out of United States ports are registered under the laws of another country and subsequent investigations and prosecutions of crimes against passengers and crewmembers may involve the laws and authorities of multiple nations;

Whereas perpetrators of sexual violence and other violent crimes on cruise ships are rarely brought to justice in light of the jurisdictional uncertainties and the absence of law enforcement authorities employing standard police investigative procedures on voyages;

Whereas sexual assault and physical assaults on cruise ships were the leading crime reported to and investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation on the high seas over the last five years, but cruise line personnel do not consistently provide sufficient access to readily available, confidential support services, such as the crisis intervention services that are available through the National Sex-

ual Assault Hotline or the National Sexual Assault Online Hotline, for American passengers who become victims of sexual violence while vacationing on cruise ships;

Whereas consumers who book a cruise generally do not receive information at the point of sale about their legal rights as a cruise passenger and who to contact for help in the event a crime occurs during their oceangoing voyage; and

Whereas groups such as the International Cruise Victims Association, the National Center for Victims of Crime, and the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network have voiced concern about the safety of passengers and crewmembers traveling on ocean voyages: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That it is the sense of the House of Rep-
2 resentatives that—

3 (1) the members of the International Cruise
4 Victims Association, the National Center for Victims
5 of Crime, and the Rape, Abuse & Incest National
6 Network are to be commended for their leadership
7 in highlighting the problem of crimes against Amer-
8 ican citizens on cruise ships;

9 (2) cruise line passengers and crewmembers
10 who become victims of crime while traveling on the
11 high seas are often denied access to justice and sup-
12 port services, and Americans who are victims of
13 crime on a cruise ship should have ready access to
14 justice and additional steps should be taken to en-

1 sure that the perpetrators of such crimes are
2 brought to justice;

3 (3) the cruise industry should provide com-
4 prehensive information to passengers about security
5 risks and maintain necessary security personnel on
6 each ship; and

7 (4) Congress should provide oversight to ensure
8 the safety and security of American passengers.

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