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Simitian bills take aim at cruise ship waste, pollution

■ Environmental group says liners can generate 50 tons of garbage and 210,000 gallons of sewage in a week

By Terence Chea
ASSOCIATED PRESS

SAN FRANCISCO — The cruise industry's rapid expansion has prompted legislative efforts to crack down on luxury liners that dump waste and spew dirty air near California's coast.

The Legislature is considering three bills that would curb wastewater and air pollution from cruise ships that travel in or near state waters. If adopted, proponents say they would be the strictest state laws regulating an industry that operates mostly beyond national borders.

"The industry says 'trust us,' but we've gotten to the point where 'trust us' isn't strong environmental policy anymore," said Assemblyman Joe Simitian, D-Palo Alto, who authored two of the bills.

The industry calls the legislation unnecessary and expensive to enforce, pointing out that cruise lines have adopted their own pollution-control measures and that other ships pollute the Pacific as well.

"Why don't we attack the overall issues as opposed to targeting a minuscule part of the problem?" said Michael Crye, president of the International Council of Cruise Lines. "The oceans are our home, too. It's inherent to our business interests to protect those places."

The cruise industry has grown about 8 percent each year over the past decade, Crye said. Last year in California, cruise ships made about 280 port calls and generated \$1.1 billion, according to a new state report.

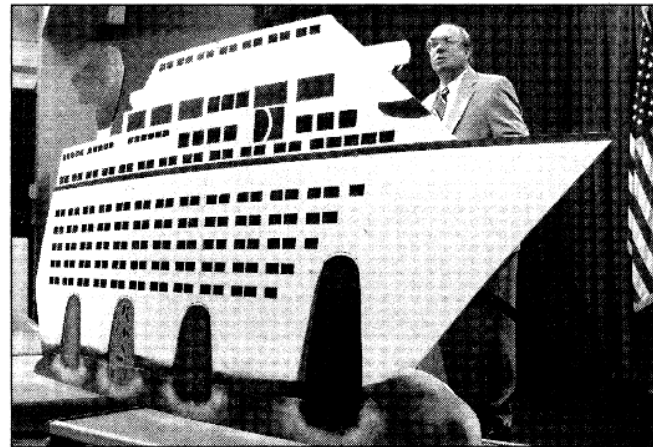
Increasingly, however, the industry has become the target of environmentalists who say lax regulations allow ships to discharge hazardous waste and release pollutants with little oversight. A typical cruise ship can generate 50 tons of garbage and 210,000 gallons of sewage during a one-week voyage,

according to the Bluewater Network, a San Francisco-based group backing the bills.

"They have an abysmal record for protecting the environment," said Russell Long, the group's executive director. "They need to be cleaned up, and it needs to happen fast. By postponing action, they will continue to dump millions of gallons of waste into California's waters."

The trio of bills passed the state Assembly in June and the Senate Appropriations Committee must act by next week if they are to become law. The full Senate would still have to approve them and Gov. Gray Davis' office said he supports their policy aims but has some concerns over enforcement costs.

The latest legislative push began after a cruise liner several miles off shore dumped about 36,000 gallons of sewage and other wastewater into the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary last October — and didn't report the incident for five months. The dumping outraged



RICH PEDRONCELLI — Associated Press

STANDING BEHIND a mockup of a luxury liner dumping toxic waste, Assemblyman Joe Simitian, D-Palo Alto, discusses his measure to crack down on cruise ships dumping of pollutants near California's coast, during a Capitol news conference in Sacramento on Wednesday.

the city of Monterey, which voted to ban from its harbor ships operated by Crystal Cruises.

The cruise company apologized, but pointed out that it did not break the law. Federal law only prohibits cruise ships from

dumping untreated sewage within state waters, which extend three miles from shore, but does not regulate other types of wastewater.

Alaska is the only state that has adopted further laws to control cruise ship pollution. In

Florida and Hawaii, cruise companies sign agreements with the state not to discharge waste.

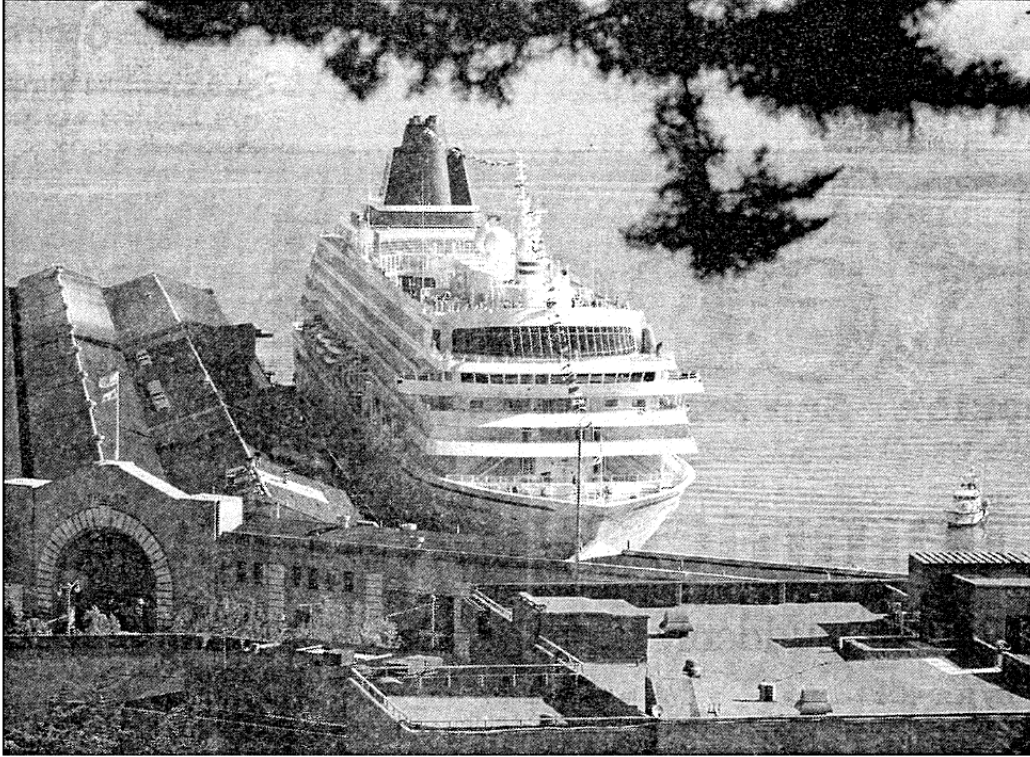
Two of the California bills would prohibit the release of treated and untreated sewage, oily bilgewater and "gray water" from kitchens, laundries and showers into state waters or the state's four national marine sanctuaries. The third bill would require that ships operating within 25 miles of the California coast use cleaner burning diesel fuel and prohibit them from using on-board incinerators within 90 miles.

The cruise industry opposes all three bills, said Sande George, a Sacramento lobbyist for the cruise lines council.

The wastewater bills' enforcement provisions are too open-ended, and the discharge ban is unnecessary because ships' water treatment systems clean water adequately, she said. The industry opposes the air pollution bill because ship engines were not developed to run on highway-quality diesel, and ships need flexibility to run incinerators to dispose of on-board waste.

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AP photo

NEW LAW: The cruise ship Crystal Harmony is shown docked at Pier 35 in San Francisco last year. Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger on Thursday signed into law legislation aimed at stopping cruise ships from polluting the air and water near the state's coastline.

Cruise-ship pollution restricted

By Terence Chea
The Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger on Thursday signed two bills aimed at stopping cruise ships from polluting the air and water near the California coastline, but left unsigned a third bill that would ban the dumping of sewage within state waters.

One law, authored by Assemblyman George Nakano, D-Torrance, bans the discharge of "gray water" from cruise ship kitchens, laundries and showers into state waters, which extend three miles from shore.

The other, by Assemblyman Joseph Simitian, D-Palo Alto, prohibits luxury liners from burning garbage in on-board incinerators while they are in state waters.

But Schwarzenegger didn't act on a measure that would ban the release of sewage, both treated and untreated, into state waters. The legislation, which is opposed by the cruise industry, automatically becomes law if the Republican governor doesn't sign or veto it by Sept. 30.

Environmentalists cheered Schwarzenegger's signing of the two bills, which go into effect on Jan. 1, and urged him to sign the third.

"It's a great victory for our coastline, and it sets the bar higher for cruise ship pollution around the country," said Teri Shore, campaign director for San Francisco-based Bluewater Network, which sponsored the measures. "If he vetoes the sewage bill, the cruise lines will have his blessing to dump in

California waters without oversight."

Michael Crye, president of the Arlington, Va.-based International Council for Cruise Lines, said the industry supported the two new laws because cruise lines generally don't dump gray water or incinerate garbage in state waters.

But the council, which represents about 80 percent of the cruise industry, opposes the sewage bill. Crye said the group's members use advanced wastewater purification systems that "discharge water that is close to drinking water quality."

"(The bill) doesn't recognize this very promising, very efficacious technology," Crye said. "We believe an outright ban on the use of these systems in coastal waters is myopic."