

This year nearly 10 million Americans will board a cruise ship and set sail from an American port. At this time there has been little or no oversight or accountability of the safety and security of these citizens. There have been a number of high profile cases in the news of passengers falling overboard, passengers gone missing, and passengers being victims of sexual assaults.

The online database established by the amendment will be maintained by the Secretary of the Coast Guard, and keep a numerical tally of deaths, missing persons and reported crimes on cruise ships. The online crime statistics will be updated quarterly and will be delineated by cruise line. Cruise lines will be required to include a link to the online database on their websites.

“One of my constituents was the victim of a brutal assault while on a cruise vacation. She turned to me for help after the cruise line had provided little or no support, and has since been a true advocate in making the government aware of this gross oversight in the safety of vacationing American citizens,” said Rep. Matsui.

Upon investigating the issue, Rep. Matsui pursued federal action. Two Congressional hearings were held on the issue at Rep. Matsui's urging.

As a result of the findings of those hearings, Rep. Matsui crafted the amendment included in today's Coast Guard Reauthorization.

Last year, she introduced a federal resolution to call attention to the growing level of crime on cruise ships and the lack of federal regulation overseeing the cruise industry. The resolution states that Americans should have access to justice and information regarding security risks, and that Congress should provide oversight to ensure the safety of American passengers.

“People have a reasonable expectation of safety when they are vacationing on cruise ships. Ten million Americans will take cruise vacations this year alone, and they must be aware and informed of their potential of being a victim of a crime or assault on their trips,” said Rep. Matsui.

“The cruise industry has a responsibility to keep their customers safe. Increased transparency of reported crimes and increased oversight of cruise security standards will achieve this goal, and help make sure that what happened to Laurie Dishman doesn't happen to anyone else,” said Rep. Matsui.

RAINN President Scott Berkowitz applauded Congresswoman Matsui for her leadership in initiating this amendment. “Enactment of this vitally needed amendment would ensure that the American public has access to basic information about the frequency of crimes aboard cruise ships. RAINN commends Congresswoman Matsui for her role in securing House passage of this legislation, which will be of tremendous benefit to all current and future cruise ship passengers. We applaud the Congresswoman for her commitment to ensuring American cruise passengers' safety on the high seas,” said Berkowitz.

The Matsui Amendment is supported by:

Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN), National Alliance to End Sexual Violence, National Center for Victims of Crime, Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape, and National Organization for Victim Assistance

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