

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Congresswoman Doris Matsui Supports Senate Efforts To Make Cruise Vacations Safe for American Families**

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – Today, Congresswoman Doris O. Matsui (D-CA) applauded Senator John F. Kerry (D-MA) and Senate Commerce, Science and Technology Committee Chairman Jay Rockefeller (D-WV) for their commitment to keep Americans aware and protected while on cruise vacations, and for moving the Cruise Vessel Security and Safety Act of 2009 through the Senate Committee. Representative Matsui and Senator Kerry introduced this legislation earlier this year after holding multiple hearings which made apparent the gross inadequacies of current cruise safety provisions.

“The Cruise Vessel Security and Safety Act of 2009 will ensure the safety and protection of millions of Americans who embark on cruises each year,” said Congresswoman Matsui. “For far too long, American families have unknowingly been at risk on cruise ships.”

“The term ‘duty free’ does not apply to the safety of passengers,” said Senator Kerry. “Murky lines of jurisdiction are no longer an excuse for risking the safety of millions of Americans who will board cruise ships this year. Security, safety, and accountability must all be strengthened to hold criminals accountable and end the cycle of serious crimes on these vessels. I thank Chairman Rockefeller for giving this issue the timely attention it deserves and look forward to working with my colleagues to quickly move this legislation to the Senate floor.”

Rep. Matsui became aware of the need for increased protections for Americans one of her constituents, Laurie Dishman, wrote to her for help in April, 2006. Ms. Dishman was the victim of a sexual assault while on a cruise vacation, and was given no assistance by the cruise line in properly securing evidence of the assault, identifying her attacker who was an employee of the cruise ship, or prosecuting the crime once back on shore. Frustrated, Ms. Dishman reached out to her Congresswoman, who in turn called for multiple hearings on this issue and co-authored the legislation in partnership with Senator Kerry.

“We learned during Congressional hearings that there has not been a conviction of an accused rape in recent history. With continued news coverage of recent rapes on cruise ships, it is clear that legislation is both urgent and necessary,” said Matsui. “I applaud Senator Kerry and the Committee for making the safety of Americans a priority, and look forward to making significant progress moving this legislation forward in the coming weeks.”

The Cruise Vessel Security and Safety Act of 2009 incorporates the recommendations and priorities of the International Cruise Victims Association (ICV), a nonprofit organization that represents victims of crimes on cruise ships, as well as the Rape, Abuse, Incest National Network (RAINN).

“This is truly an historic day in process of putting legislating in place to control and improve safety for passengers on cruise ships,” said Ken Carver, President of ICV. “International Cruise Victims Association are indebted to Congresswoman Matsui and Senator Kerry for what they have done. I also want to say this would not have happened without the dedications of the many voluntary members of ICV whose passion and dedication to this cause has been essential to make this happen – this truly been a team effort.”

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