

## New legislation provides stronger protections for cruise ship passengers

Written by Australian Business

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Article provided by Law Offices of Charles D. Naylor Visit us at <http://www.cruiseinjuryhotline.com>

Going on a cruise can be a great way to see the world and enjoy a fun and relaxing vacation. It is important to recognize, though, that there are also certain risks involved in taking a cruise. Onboard crime and injuries are far too common, and confusing contracts can make it hard for passengers to assert their rights. What's more, the cruise industry is currently subject to a relatively low amount of federal oversight.

Pending federal legislation seeks to remedy this problem. The Cruise Passenger Protection Act would require increased disclosures on the part of cruise ship companies, and would allow the U.S. Department of Transportation broader authority to regulate the cruise industry.

### Protections for consumers

The legislation would require cruise companies to publicly disclose all alleged crimes -- including assaults, rapes and robberies -- that take place onboard their ships. This proposal is intended to give consumers the information they need to make an educated assessment of the risks they face and the company's commitment to providing a safe environment for passengers.

The legislation would also require cruise companies to redraft their customer contracts into plain English. Many cruise companies require passengers to waive important legal rights before coming onboard. The intent of this, in part, is to limit passengers' ability to sue if something goes wrong. The legislation aims to level the playing field by ensuring that consumers are fully informed before they sign any documents that could impact their legal rights.

### Oversight by the DOT

The Cruise Passenger Protection Act would also give the Department of Transportation new

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authority over cruise companies. For example, the DOT would be required to maintain a hotline and website to catalog consumer complaints. These reports would be published quarterly and would identify cruise ship vessels by name. The DOT would also have new authority to investigate complaints regarding problems such as cancellations, delays, ships skipping port destinations, bad conditions onboard ships and unfair practices regarding fares and advertising.

Under the legislation, cruise companies could be fined up to \$25,000 for first violations and up to \$50,000 for repeat violations. Serious misconduct could also result in criminal charges.

### **The rights of injured passengers**

When injuries occur on cruise ships -- be it because of crime, improper maintenance or any other cause -- it is important for passengers to take steps to protect their legal rights. Depending on the circumstances of their injuries, passengers may be able to sue to recover compensation for damages including pain and suffering, medical bills and loss of income.

If you or a loved one has been injured on a cruise ship and you think the injury may be related to negligence or misconduct on the part of the cruise company or its employees, it is advisable to consult with a personal injury attorney who is experienced in handling cruise ship claims. The attorney will be able to evaluate your case to help you understand your options for moving forward.