

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 9, 2014

Admiral Robert J. Papp, Jr.  
Commandant of the Coast Guard  
United States Coast Guard  
2701 Martin Luther King Jr Avenue Southeast  
Washington, DC 20032

Dear Admiral Papp:

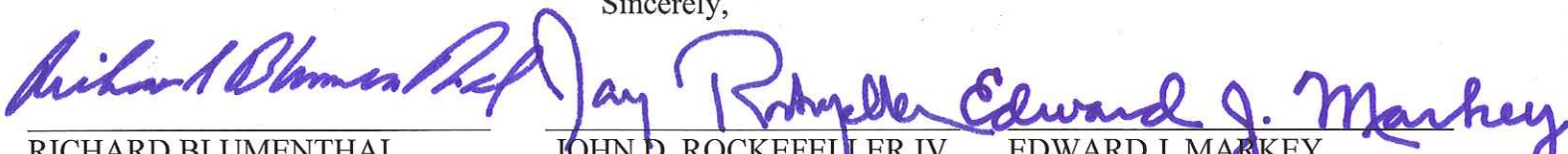
As you know, the United States Coast Guard recently announced, through a Marine Safety Information Bulletin, that it will conduct unannounced inspections of cruise ships that have exhibited patterns of safety problems. We commend the Coast Guard's commitment to strengthening the integrity of the inspection system—a crucial safeguard for the more than 22 million people projected to take a cruise this year, and write requesting information on how the Coast Guard intends to use the results of such inspections to hold cruise ships accountable for passenger and crew safety. In addition, we respectfully request that the records and results of the unannounced inspections be made public and easily available over the Internet for prospective cruise passengers to peruse before booking a trip.

A number of unfortunate incidents, which have occurred onboard of cruise vessels in recent years, have raised serious questions regarding the safety of cruises and the type of oversight that currently exists. At a National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) forum on cruise ship safety, the Coast Guard explained that certain cruise lines demonstrate a history of above average deficiencies in regular examinations and that these vessels should be the target of unannounced spot checks. We agree it is strategic of the Coast Guard to target ships and vessels that have a pattern or history of safety problems, but we further expect that consumers should also be privy to the insights and patterns that the Coast Guard already knows, in addition to the ones it discovers in the future. Furthermore, the Coast Guard does a disservice to the public when it shields from consumers the identity of cruise ships and lines that have a pattern of noncompliance.

We believe that exposure of deficiencies will provide an added level of protection for the safety of cruise passengers. During NTSB's forum, some participants expressed concern that the current agencies and organizations directed to oversee the safety of cruise vessels lack enforcement powers, and that passengers are too reliant on the cruise industry to police itself and abide by standards. By making this inspection information public and easily accessible by all, the Coast Guard empowers passenger to make more informed decisions.

As sponsors of the *Cruise Passenger Protection Act*, we look forward to continuing to work with you and other relevant oversight agencies to ensure that standards and enforcement powers are strengthened for the protection of cruise passengers and crew. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

  
RICHARD BLUMENTHAL      JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER IV      EDWARD J. MARKEY  
United States Senate      United States Senate      United States Senate