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CONTACT:

Campaign to Safeguard America's Waters

Gershon Cohen, 907-766-3005

Responsible Cruising in Alaska

Michelle Meyer, 907-230-5617

Bluewater Network

Teri Shore, 415-544-0790, ext. 20

Alaska Cruise Ship Initiative Certified for 2006 Ballot

Measure requires on-board pollution monitors, discharge permits, and \$50 per-passenger fees

Alaska's Lt. Governor Leman has certified that the Cruise Ship Ballot Initiative (CSBI) petition sponsored by Alaska-based Responsible Cruising in Alaska (RCA), the Campaign to Safeguard America's Waters, and Bluewater Network was signed by enough registered Alaskan voters to be placed on the November 2006 Alaska ballot.

If passed, the new initiative will level the economic and environmental playing fields between the cruise ship industry and other major dischargers of polluted wastes into Alaska waters. The ballot initiative would impose \$50 in fees for each cruise ship passenger in Alaska, comprised of a \$46 state excise tax and a \$4 fee for environmental monitoring. The measure will also require that cruise ships get wastewater discharge permits, turn over a percentage of gambling profits to the state and pay Alaska corporate income tax. Prior to placement on the next statewide ballot, the Alaska Legislature has an opportunity to enact a "substantially similar" piece of legislation.

"This measure will end the cruise industry's free ride on Alaska's economy and environment," said Teri Shore of Bluewater Network. "The cruise industry will certainly cry wolf over paying their fare share, but support for this measure shows that Alaskans are probably fed up with cruise executive's howling for corporate welfare and lax environmental protection."

Proposals to fairly tax the cruise industry and more comprehensively regulate sewage and other discharges have enjoyed broad support in recent years from Republicans and Democrats, as well as rural and urban Alaskans. Alaska represents nearly 10 percent of the cruise industry's world-wide revenue, from which they make billions of dollars in profits every year—which goes directly out of the state.

"Alaskans signed our petition from all over the state," said campaign coordinator Michelle Meyer of RCA. "This was a remarkable grass roots effort that would not have been successful without the unflinching support of the state's native and small business communities. Industry claims that people will stop cruising to Alaska or spend less money because we fairly tax them and monitor their pollution are ridiculous. Alaska needs to get a fair monetary return from this industry's activities, and keep our waters clean to support our subsistence and commercial fisheries as well as our independent travel industry."

The CSBI will reinstate the apportioned income tax repealed in 1998 by the Legislature, require cruise ships to pay to Alaska the same percentage of gambling profits paid by other gaming operators, and establish a statewide excise tax of \$46/passenger on ships that carry 250 or more passengers. Provided the state of Alaska adopts regulations accurately reflecting the CSBI's intent, these funds will be distributed among communities impacted by cruise ship activities and to the state for the development of ports and harbors.

To ensure compliance with Alaska pollution regulations, the CSBI will also institute a \$4 passenger fee to support placing an independent licensed marine engineer aboard every ship in Alaska waters to observe wastewater treatment practices, inspect pollution control equipment, sample ship discharges, and monitor shipboard health and sanitation practices. This will plug the pollution leaks that remain in Alaska law in the wake

of the special session action by the Alaska Legislature in 2001. Federal law requires every oil, mining, timber, and seafood processing operation to have a permit to discharge polluted wastewater that requires meeting all Alaska Water Quality Standards for all waste streams. Each foreign flagged cruise ship transports thousands of passengers and crew and generates millions of gallons of contaminated wastewater, yet the industry has hidden for over 20 years behind a permit exemption intended for vessels with a handful of crewmen aboard. Cruise ship lobbyists successfully extended that exemption to Alaska permitting practices despite the fact that virtually every major cruise line has been convicted of multiple felony charges for dumping in the last decade.

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