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BILL TO BAN SHIP DUMPING AND TRASH BURNING CLOSER TO BECOMING LAW SB 771 – Simitian – advancing in Assembly

Sacramento, CA - A precedent-setting bill that would ban large ships from dumping wastewater or burning trash in California waters this week passed out of the Assembly Environmental Safety and Toxic Materials Committee on a 7-0 vote. It already cleared the Senate on a bi-partisan vote. If enacted, it would be the first law in the nation to ban cargo and container ship discharges and on-board trash incineration in coastal waters.

Sponsored by Bluewater Network and authored by Senator Joe Simitian (D-Palo Alto), SB 771 would extend the bans on cruise ship wastewater discharges and incineration enacted last year to all commercial ocean-going vessels including container, cargo and tanker ships that call on California ports. Violators would be subject to fines of up to \$25,000 per violation per day.

The bill would prohibit ships from dumping sewage (treated and untreated), sewage sludge, oily bilge water, graywater and hazardous wastes into state waters, as well as ban on-board trash incineration.

"This measure is a win-win. It allows shippers to serve California while still protecting California's coast," said Simitian. "I'm gratified that in this instance the shipping industry is part of the solution, not part of the problem."

"The days of dumping everything overboard is coming to an end in California," said Teri Shore, Bluewater Network's Clean Vessels Campaigner. "Dilution is no longer the solution to ship pollution. We've learned the hard way that people, beaches, shellfish and sea creatures are all harmed by ocean dumping."

Currently ships can legally dump most wastewater except raw sewage directly into state waters and harbors. In 2003, commercial ocean-going vessels made 9,558 calls on California's ports. Each vessel typically spends one to four days in port and state waters. Based on port traffic data, these ships generate 1.5 million gallons of sewage and 9.3 million gallons of graywater per year.

Federal law allows these and other substances to be dumped directly into harbors and coastal waters, either treated (sewage, oily bilge water) or untreated (graywater, sewage sludge). No monitoring or sampling is required to ensure treatment standards are met. Ocean-going vessels have been fined millions of dollars for illegally dumping untreated oily water directly into coastal waters and oceans. Incineration is unregulated and shipboard hazardous wastes treatment has never been clearly defined in statute.

Instead of discharging into state waters, container, cargo and tanker ships can hold wastes and either discharge out to sea or into shoreside facilities as allowed by federal and international law. Ships are equipped with large holding tanks, so these requirements will not impose an economic burden on the shipping industry in California. Ships not equipped with holding tanks will be exempted until the state surveys the fleet to determine the number and size of ships that cannot comply and considers next steps.

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