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Majority of Simitian bills to become law

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More stringent cruise ship pollution regulation and stronger protections for the elderly are among legislation authored this year by Sen. Joseph Simitian, D-Palo Alto, being signed into law Jan. 1, 2005.

New laws affecting the cruise ship industry would prohibit dumping of "blackwater," or sewage, and onboard garbage incineration within three miles of the California coastline. Other legislation affecting the state's growing elderly population would make it easier to prosecute

elder abusers and increase the maximum imprisonment time in a county jail to one year and the fine to \$2,000.

Overall, the former Assembly member is satisfied with his performance. Just three of his 10 bills failed to earn the governor's

approval, but he concedes that it was a lighter law-making year than usual. He points to the leadership shakeup in Sacramento as the reason why.

"Seven out of 10 is considered pretty good," Simitian told the Daily News. "This governor has vetoed

more bills than the previous governor we had."

Simitian was surprised to see a bill, AB 1650, putting greater control of funding for teacher training back in local hands vetoed.

"That was probably my biggest

See SIMITIAN, page 37

SIMITIAN

FROM PAGE 1

surprise," Simitian said. "I thought it was in line with the governor's policy and position on this issue. I thought this was exactly what the governor was encouraging us to do. They're always next year."

A rundown of Simitian bills being signed into law next year:

1. AB 471 Cruise Ships, Air Pollution: Provides greater protection to California's coastal environment and air quality by prohibiting cruise ships from conducting onboard incineration when operating within three miles of the Californian coast.

2. AB 2611 Elder Abuse: Makes it easier to prosecute criminal cases of physical elder abuse by removing the requirement that prosecutors prove actual knowledge of a victim's age; and substitutes instead the less burdensome "knew or should have known" standard used elsewhere in the Code. The bill also helps elders more easily recover fees and costs in elder financial abuse cases.

3. AB 2672 Cruise Ships Blackwater: Prohibits cruise ships from dumping sewage into California

waters (i.e., within 3 miles of California's coast).

4. AB 2791 Skilled Nursing Facilities: Requires nursing staff at skilled nursing facilities and intermediate care facilities to be trained in recognizing and reporting resident rights violations. Clarifies that former residents have a right to a private right of action if their rights have been violated, and updates resident rights to include all rights recognized in state and federal regulations.

5. AB 2814 California Environ-

mental Quality Act (CEQA): Makes a clarifying amendment to provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) related to "real parties in interest."

6. AB 1546 San Mateo County, Vehicle Fee: Authorizes the City/County Association of Governments of San Mateo County to assess up to \$4 in motor vehicle fees. The fee would be used in San Mateo County to fund projects that reduce traffic congestion and support the state-mandated Countywide Stormwater Pollution Prevention Program.

To be signed into law July 1, 2005

7. AB 1854 Car Headlights: Requires operators of motor vehicles to turn their headlights on whenever windshield wipers are in use to improve visibility to other drivers.

Bills that were vetoed:

1. AB 1650 Teacher Support and Development Act of 2005

2. AB 2673 Natural Resources, Grant of Federal Lands:

3. AB 2783 Recording Fees, Elder and Dependent Adult Financial Abuse Prevention Trust Fund.