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25 June 2026

Executive Director Allen Garfinkle
Board of Pilot Commissioners
660 Davis Street
San Francisco, CA 94111

Captain John Carlier / President, Port Agent
Captain Jason Covell / Marine Superintendent
San Francisco Bar Pilots
East End, Pier 9
San Francisco, CA 94111

Dear Mr. Garfinkle, Captain Carlier, Captain Covell:

I've been operating passenger vessels on San Francisco Bay for many years and I have witnessed a continued carelessness in the operation of the PV GOLDEN GATE.

As a USCG veteran and currently a USCG Qualified Instructor, I encourage prospective Merchant Mariner Credential holders to uphold the Coast Guard's core values of Honor, Respect, and Devotion to Duty. And to embrace their future work with skill and humility and to excel in their craft in all ways.

I often carry 350+ passengers on board, with persons of all ages and physical capabilities. On numerous occasions I have been in crossing situations with PV GOLDEN GATE where there was no regard to the amount of wake generated and where a very simple alteration of GOLDEN GATE's course would have taken my stern and the result would have been less disruptive. Crossings are often very close aboard.

There is also a regular and concerning disregard for the Navigation Rules. It is unknown if the behavior is lack of knowledge or arrogance. Adherence to the Rules is so easy to accomplish.

Rule 2 – Responsibility – to follow the Rules.

Rule 7 – Risk of Collision – proper actions to take in a meeting situation – “If there is any doubt such risk shall be deemed to exist”.

Rule 9a – Narrow Channels – operate on the starboard side of a narrow channel – GOLDEN GATE is often on the opposite side for no reason when transiting in the Oakland Middle and Inner Harbors.

Rule 14 – Head On – Expectation is to pass on the port side of each other and is often not done even when easily accomplished, and no response to calls.

Rule 15 – “When two power-driven vessels are crossing so as to involve risk of collision, the vessel which has the other on her own starboard side shall keep out of the way and shall, if the circumstances of the case admit, avoid crossing ahead of the other vessel.” I see many cases where PV GOLDEN GATE does not yield, requiring the stand-on vessel to take action.

Rule 16 – Action by Give-Way Vessel – I regularly witness no action, requiring action by the stand-on vessel.

Rule 34(h) – Sound and Light Signals by Radiotelephone – All of the Bay’s commercial traffic (ships, tugs, passenger vessels) actively uses the bridge-to-bridge Designated Frequency (CH 13) per 33 CFR 26.04 to coordinate crossings. PV GOLDEN GATE is very noticeably silent and when called will often not respond. This is especially risky when the stand on vessel is expected to take action.

The most egregious event happened on 22 June in Anchorage 9 at approximately 1730. This involved a crossing situation where I was operating a patrol vessel under USCG orders, traveling northbound. GOLDEN GATE was eastbound to a ship in the anchorage. There existed a crossing situation of constant bearing decreasing range for at least 30 seconds. On the stand on vessel, our crew maintained course and speed per Rule 17. A call on CH 13 to clarify intentions went unanswered. When collision was imminent, we were forced to back down per Rule 17 (ii), with PV GOLDEN GATE passing within 50 feet of our bow and throwing a violent wake.

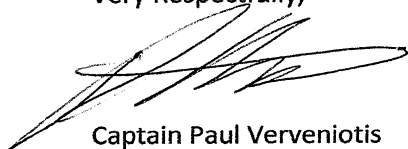
This behavior is unacceptable and not in keeping with the positive reputation of the San Francisco Bar Pilots and their Association. It is commonly considered by other captains that the GOLDEN GATE is operated such that they “own the Bay”. I understand that the crews have scheduling pressure while servicing the ships. Every working mariner has schedule challenges. And it never justifies lack of adherence to the Navigation Rules.

Captains often excuse the behavior of recreational boaters who should but sometimes do not understand the Navigation Rules and other aspects of good seamanship. However, professional mariners are and should be held to a higher standard and I find it inexcusable that the operators of PV GOLDEN GATE have exhibited such careless and unseamanlike operations for years.

As a USCG veteran and currently a USCG Qualified Instructor, I encourage prospective Merchant Mariner Credential holders to uphold the Coast Guard’s core values of Honor, Respect, and Devotion to Duty. And to embrace their future work with skill and humility and to excel in their craft in all ways.

I trust that this issue will be addressed through education and awareness of the perception held by the Bay’s professional mariner fleet.

Very Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Verveniots", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Captain Paul Verveniots