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Nation's Tugboat, Towboat and Barge Industry to Call on Congress: Urge Support for Vessel Discharge Reforms, American Jobs and Waterways Reliability

ARLINGTON, VA – The American Waterways Operators, the national trade association representing the tugboat, towboat and barge industry, will be calling on Congress tomorrow, April 15, during AWO's Barge-In, an annual event that will bring 170 vessel owners and operators together in over 150 meetings with Senators and Representatives.

"AWO members play a vital role in ensuring the safe and efficient movement of the nation's critical cargo," said Tom Allegretti, President & CEO of the American Waterways Operators. "The tugboat, towboat and barge industry directly employs tens of thousands of workers while supporting hundreds of thousands more. We want to ensure that Congress understands the value of our industry to the nation and the importance of our key public policy priorities."

Vessel Discharge Reform Legislation

Among the group's top priorities is securing bipartisan support for enactment of the Vessel Incidental Discharge Act in 2015. This measure, S. 373/H.R.980, would replace a patchwork of overlapping and conflicting federal and state regulations with a uniform, science-based federal framework for vessel discharge regulation. The Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation approved S. 373 in February, with strong bipartisan support. The bill has also been introduced in the House.

Support for the Jones Act

AWO members will also be seeking continued support for the Jones Act, which requires that vessels moving cargo in U.S. domestic commerce are owned, crewed, and built by Americans. With the Jones Act as its statutory foundation, the domestic maritime industry supports nearly 500,000 family-wage jobs and almost \$100 billion in economic output. Today, more than 40,000 American-owned vessels – the majority of them tugboats, towboats and barges – move agricultural goods, petroleum, coal, natural gas, chemicals and other essential commodities safely and efficiently along our rivers and coasts.

Waterways Reliability and Invasive Species Management

The Chicago Area Waterways System (CAWS) is the sole link between the Mississippi River and the Great Lakes. Every year, barges safely and efficiently carry almost 20 million tons of cargo through the CAWS, including the building blocks of the U.S. economy, such as grain and petroleum. However, efforts to stop the spread of invasive species, including Asian carp, have the potential to impact both the ecosystem and economy of this vital transportation link.

For the past decade, the tugboat, towboat and barge industry has worked in partnership with key federal agencies and more than 30 public and private stakeholders, in developing long-term solutions to prevent Asian carp from advancing toward the Great Lakes while maintaining the uninterrupted flow of commercial navigation. AWO members will be asking Congress to maintain a balance

between management of invasive species and the need to maintain an open and reliable inland waterways system.

The American Waterways Operators is the national trade association representing the tugboat, towboat and barge industry, which operates on the rivers, the Great Lakes, and along the coasts and in the harbors of the United States. Barge transportation serves the nation as the safest, most environmentally friendly and most economical mode of freight transportation. For more information about AWO, please visit www.americanwaterways.com.

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