

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 22, 2016Contact: Amelia Townsend, 703-373-2252
atownsend@americanwaterways.com**American Tugboat, Towboat and Barge Industry Urged Support for American Jobs, Vessel Discharge Reform, and Waterways Infrastructure**

ARLINGTON, VA – Members of the American Waterways Operators, the national trade association representing the tugboat, towboat and barge industry, called on Congress on Wednesday during AWO's annual Barge-In event, where more than 160 vessel owners and operators held 220 meetings with lawmakers in the Senate and House of Representatives.

“AWO members play a vital role in ensuring the safe, secure and efficient movement of the nation’s critical cargo,” said Tom Allegretti, AWO President & CEO. “The tugboat, towboat and barge industry directly employs tens of thousands of workers while supporting the jobs of hundreds of thousands more and providing valuable support for homeland and national security. We wanted to ensure that Congress understands the value of our industry to the nation and the importance of our key public policy priorities.”

Support for the Jones Act

AWO members urged Congress to continue to strongly support the Jones Act, which requires that vessels moving cargo in U.S. domestic commerce be 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 essential commodities safely and efficiently on our rivers and along our coasts. U.S. military leaders strongly support the Jones Act for its role in maintaining our nation’s shipbuilding industrial base and sealift capability and the force multiplier provided by American mariners who serve as the eyes and ears for the U.S. Coast Guard on our waterways.

Vessel Discharge Reform Legislation

Among AWO's top priorities this year is securing passage of the Vessel Incidental Discharge Act. 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 administered by the U.S. Coast Guard. Passage of this much-needed legislation will fix a broken regulatory system that hinders maritime commerce, stifles business investment and wastes taxpayer money on duplicative and overlapping regulations.

Ensure Reliable Inland Waterways Infrastructure

AWO members urged Congress to maintain investments in infrastructure while opposing policies that would hinder or halt commercial navigation. A reliable inland waterway infrastructure is essential to America's domestic commerce and international trade. Every year, barges safely and efficiently carry almost 800 million tons of economically critical cargo, including agricultural products, petroleum, chemicals, coal, steel, cement, and containerized cargo.

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.