

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ARLINGTON, VA – Saying that a uniform national framework for the regulation of vessel discharges is urgently needed, the American Waterways Operators and a broad-based coalition of organizations that rely on marine vessels to transport essential cargoes called upon the Senate Commerce Committee to move quickly to approve S.373, the Vessel Incidental Discharge Act (VIDA), bipartisan legislation introduced by Senators Marco Rubio (R-FL), John Thune (R-SD), and Bill Nelson (D-FL).

In a [letter](#) to Senators Thune and Nelson, respectively the Chairman and Ranking Member of the Commerce Committee, the coalition stated that vessel discharge reform legislation would rectify an untenable situation “by establishing a uniform, science-based federal framework for the regulation of ballast water and other vessel discharges that will benefit all segments of the U.S. maritime industry.”

The coalition expressed its strong support for S.373, which would establish a nationally uniform and environmentally sound standard for ballast water and other vessel discharges, in lieu of the current “overlapping patchwork of federal and state regulations that makes compliance complicated, confusing and costly.” Mariners must comply with regulations from the U.S. Coast Guard, the Environmental Protection Agency and as many as 25 individual state requirements. Signers of the coalition letter include nearly 60 organizations representing U.S. and international vessel owners and operators; fishing vessel, passenger vessel and charter boat operators; labor unions; industries that rely on marine vessels to transport essential cargoes in domestic and international commerce; marine terminals; and port authorities.

“The bill is good for the maritime transportation industry and the industries that rely upon it, good for the health of the nation’s waterways, and good for the American taxpayer,” the letter concluded.

Companion legislation was introduced in the House of Representatives last week. H.R.980, introduced by Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Subcommittee Chairman Duncan Hunter (R-CA), Rep. Elijah Cummings (D-MD) and Rep. Frank LoBiondo (R-NJ), is substantively identical to S.373.

The American Waterways Operators is the national trade association representing the tugboat, towboat and barge industry, which operates on the rivers, the Great Lakes, along the coasts and 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.