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Nearly 60 National and Regional Organizations Call on Senate Committee to Consider Urgently Needed Vessel Discharge Legislation

ARLINGTON, VA – On June 20, a diverse coalition of 58 national and regional organizations representing a wide array of leading business, maritime and labor organizations signed on to a [letter](#) to Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee Chairman John Rockefeller (D-WV) and Ranking Member John Thune (R-SD) urging that the committee schedule S. 2094, a bill that would establish a uniform national framework for the regulation of ballast water and other vessel discharges, for consideration and be favorably reported out of committee.

S. 2094, introduced on March 6 by Sens. Mark Begich (D-AK) and Marco Rubio (R-FL), has 29 additional bipartisan co-sponsors, including a majority of Senate Commerce Committee members. The bill would remedy the existing confusing, costly and ineffective patchwork of state and federal rules governing vessel discharges with which operators must comply.

“The strong support from such a diverse coalition of stakeholders who rely on the waterways for the safe and efficient movement of the nation’s commerce in an environmentally responsible way and the clear consensus reached by nearly one-third of the Senate indicate that this bill is sound public policy and an achievable solution to remedy a serious problem,” said Tom Allegretti, AWO’s President & CEO.

“S. 2094 is urgently needed,” the letter stated. “Today, two federal agencies, the U.S. Coast Guard and the Environmental Protection Agency, regulate ballast water and other vessel discharges under two differing statutory authorities. And, because neither federal statute preempts state action, more than two dozen states have established their own requirements for many of those same discharges – over 150 in all. This overlapping patchwork of federal and state regulations makes compliance complicated, confusing and costly for vessel owners and mariners.”

“It is counterproductive to the goal of enhanced environmental protection,” the letter continued, “...and it has forced resource-constrained federal and state agencies to duplicate efforts and expend significant time and taxpayer money in a well-intentioned but unsuccessful attempt to harmonize their requirements. S. 2094 would rectify this untenable situation by establishing a uniform, science-based federal framework for the regulation of ballast water and other vessel discharges that is good for the maritime transportation industry and the industries that rely upon it, good for the marine environment, and good for the American taxpayer.”

In addition to the American Waterways Operators, signatories to the letter include: Alaska Bering Sea Crabbers Association, American Association of Port Authorities, American Chemistry Council, American Great Lakes Ports Association, American Iron and Steel Institute, American Maritime Congress, American Maritime Officers, American Maritime Officers Service, American Tunaboat Association, Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway Association, At-sea Processors Association, Cape Cod Commercial Fishermen's Alliance, Chamber of Shipping of America, Conservation Cooperative of Gulf Fishermen, Dredging Contractors of America, Florida Guides Association, Freezer Longline Coalition, Groundfish Forum, Gulf Intracoastal Canal Association, Infrastructure Council of the Illinois Chamber of Commerce, International Association of Drilling Contractors, International Longshoremen's Association, International Organization of Masters, Mates & Pilots, International Propeller Club of the U.S., INTERTANKO, Jacksonville Marine Transportation Exchange, Lake Carriers' Association, Louisiana Association of Waterways, Operators and Shipyards, Marine Engineers' Beneficial Association, Mariners' Advisory Committee for the Bay and River Delaware, Maritime Association of the Port of NY/NJ, Maritime Institute for Research and Industrial Development, National Association of Charterboat Operators, National Association of Manufacturers, National Association of Waterfront Employers, National Grain and Feed Association, The National Industrial Transportation League, National Mining Association, New York Shipping Association, North Pacific Fishing Vessel Owners Association, Northwest Marine Trades Association, Offshore Marine Service Association, Pacific Seafood Processors Association, Panama City Boatmen Association, Passenger Vessel Association, Seafarers International Union, Shipbuilders Council of America, Steel Manufacturers Association, Texas Waterway Operators Association, Tug and Barge Committee Port of NY/NJ, Transportation Institute, United Catcher Boats Association, Upper Mississippi Waterway Association, U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Water Quality Insurance Syndicate Western States Petroleum Association and the World Shipping Council.

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

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