

**For Immediate Release**  
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Contact: Amelia Townsend, 703-373-2252  
[atownsend@americanwaterways.com](mailto:atownsend@americanwaterways.com)

**American Waterways Operators President Urges Support for  
Jones Act and Strong Vessel Discharge Legislative Reform**

ARLINGTON, VA – On April 14 in testimony before the Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Subcommittee of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, Tom Allegretti, President & CEO of The American Waterways Operators, will press for continued defense of the Jones Act and a uniform federal framework for vessel discharge regulation. The hearing will focus on the status and implementation of maritime transportation safety and stewardship programs and rulemakings.

The Jones Act, which is section 27 of the Merchant Marine Act of 1920, supports a stable, high-performing and highly competitive domestic maritime industry. More than 40,000 American-built vessels move vital cargoes along the nation’s inland rivers and coasts. The industry generates \$100 billion in annual economic output. In his testimony, Mr. Allegretti will tell the Committee that despite the national security and economic benefits of the Jones Act, it is threatened by a small, but vocal minority. He will add that the Jones Act is vital to U.S. homeland security, describing the U.S.-flag vessels as an “indispensable part” of the nation’s domestic defense network.

“A vote to repeal the Jones Act would be, in effect, a vote to massively increase funding for the Coast Guard’s vessel safety inspection and law enforcement activities, as well as for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement—both of which would be required by the vastly increased presence of foreign vessels and foreign workers along America’s shores and in the interior bloodstream of our nation,” according to Mr. Allegretti’s testimony.

Mr. Allegretti will also urge Congress to enact a uniform national standard for ballast water and other vessel discharges to end a patchwork of federal and state regulations that is counterproductive to enhanced environmental protection, confusing and costly for vessel owners, and inefficient for state and federal agencies.

Mr. Allegretti will urge Congress to pass H.R. 980, the Vessel Incidental Discharge Act. “Now is the time for Congress to resolve this regulatory mess by enacting legislation that will enhance protections for the waterways, boost efforts to develop improved ballast water treatment technologies, and eliminate uncertainty that stymies investment. H.R. 980 is a solid, bipartisan compromise that would replace the current unworkable regulatory patchwork with one set of scientifically based, environmentally protective and technologically achievable rules.”

*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](http://www.americanwaterways.com).