

Need for Uniform Vessel Discharge Framework Takes Center Stage

AWO Testifies on Need for a Single National Framework for the Regulation of Vessel Discharges; Sens. Begich and Rubio Introduce VIDA Bill

Stating that the overlapping patchwork of federal and state regulations for vessel discharges is confusing and costly for vessel owners and mariners, counterproductive to the goal of enhanced environmental protection, and forces federal and state agencies to expend time and taxpayer money on duplicate efforts, Tom Allegretti, AWO President & CEO, testified before the U.S. House of Representatives' Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Subcommittee on March 4 to urge the Subcommittee to "establish a single national framework for the regulation of vessel discharges in which vessel owners are subject to one set of scientifically based, environmentally protective, and technologically achievable vessel discharges rules."

Two days later, Sens. Mark Begich (D-AK) and Marco Rubio (R-FL), chairman and ranking member, respectively, of the Subcommittee on Oceans, Atmosphere, Fisheries and Coast Guard of the Senate



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AWO President & CEO Tom Allegretti testified before the House Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Subcommittee at a March 4 hearing on maritime transportation regulations.

Commerce Committee, introduced the Vessel Incidental Discharges Act (VIDA) of 2014 with 20 bipartisan cosponsors. The strong support for Senate introduction of the bill, which would put in place a uniform national standard for the regulation of ballast water and other vessel discharges, is a significant step forward in the effort to enact legislation essential to ending the existing confusing, costly and ineffective patchwork of state and federal rules.

Vessel Discharges Bill Introduced in Senate

In a March 7 press release, AWO expressed the industry's gratitude to Sens. Begich and Rubio for their leadership in

introducing VIDA. "AWO members applaud their leadership in growing such robust, bipartisan support and ensuring that their Senate colleagues understand the bill's importance," Mr. Allegretti said, adding, "The significance of this bill, and the strong Senate support behind it, cannot be overstated," Mr. Allegretti said. "There is a critical need to enact legislation that protects our nation's waterways while improving the efficiency and effectiveness of marine transportation. This bill accomplishes those objectives."

"Our nation's mariners and vessel operators face an extremely challenging compliance burden with two federal agencies and 25 states all regulating the

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same vessel discharges in overlapping and inconsistent ways,” Mr. Allegretti continued. “Introduction of this bill with more than one-fifth of the Senate as cosponsors is a clear indication that there is a real need for legislation to correct a broken regulatory regime that is just not working.”

Sens. Kelly Ayotte (R-NH), Roy Blunt (R-MO), John Boozman (R-AR), Bob Casey (D-PA), Thad Cochran (R-MS), Susan Collins (R-ME), Mazie Hirono (D-HI), Mary Landrieu (D-LA), Claire McCaskill (D-MO), Edward Markey (D-MA), Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), Bill Nelson (D-FL), Mark Pryor (D-AR), Jay Rockefeller (D-WV), Brian Schatz (D-HI), John Thune (R-SD), Patrick Toomey (R-PA), David Vitter (R-LA), Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) and Roger Wicker (R-MS) joined Sens. Begich and Rubio as original cosponsors of the legislation. AWO is pressing ahead with lobbying efforts to garner additional cosponsors.

“Establishing a uniform national standard for vessel discharge regulation is one of our industry’s top legislative priorities and sound national policy,” Mr. Allegretti concluded. “We look forward to working with the bill’s sponsors to ensure that it can be quickly considered by the full Senate and move one step closer to being enacted into law.”

The bill has been referred to the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee for legislative action. The chairman and ranking member of that committee, Sens. John Rockefeller (D-WV) and John Thune (R-SD), are cosponsors of the bill.

For more information on VIDA, please contact Craig Montesano at (703) 841-

9300, extension 297, or cmontesano@vesselalliance.com.

Allegretti Testifies at House Subcommittee Hearing

Mr. Allegretti pressed the case for House action on vessel discharge reform legislation at the House Coast Guard Subcommittee hearing on the eve of VIDA introduction in the Senate. Explaining to lawmakers that the U.S. Coast Guard and the U.S. 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 state-specific requirements for many of those same discharges—Mr. Allegretti stated, “This situation is untenable, it is unnecessary, and bipartisan Congressional leadership is badly needed to fix it.” To watch the hearing, click [here](#).

As an example, Mr. Allegretti displayed a graphic to illustrate the federal and state requirements imposed on a tug-barge unit transporting crude oil from Puget Sound, WA, to the Port of Richmond, CA (see graphic, page 3). This situation is unnecessary, he explained, because “[o]ver the past three years, there has emerged a national scientific consensus about the capability of currently available ballast water treatment technology. Scientific experts, the Coast Guard, EPA, and the states—all of the states—are now in agreement on the ballast water treatment standard that is achievable with current technology.”

Mr. Allegretti stated that despite this agreement, “federal and state

regulators have been unable to eliminate overlap and inconsistency between their regulations. This is because they are accountable to different statutory authorities which they believe limit their flexibility to act.” Only Congress can fix this problem, Mr. Allegretti concluded, by passing legislation to establish a uniform federal framework for vessel discharges regulation that “provides vessel owners with the certainty that multi-million dollar investments in ballast water treatment technology will be acceptable wherever that vessel calls” and “save[s] the American taxpayer the wasteful expense created by duplication of effort among federal and state agencies that will never be able to harmonize their regulations fully unless the statutory framework under which they operate is changed.”

Rep. Frank LoBiondo (R-NJ), who chaired the hearing in the absence of subcommittee Chairman Duncan Hunter (R-CA), asserted that “the situation is ridiculous. It is completely unreasonable to ask vessel operators to comply with two federal standards and as many as 25 different, contradictory, and unachievable state standards.” Rep. LoBiondo stated that he “looks forward to working with my colleagues in the House and Senate on bipartisan legislation to establish a uniform national ballast water discharge standard.”

The hearing featured two panels of government and industry witnesses. Subcommittee Ranking Member John Garamendi (D-CA) asked RDML Joseph Servidio, Assistant Commandant for Prevention Policy for the U.S. Coast Guard, and Michael

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Shapiro, Principal Deputy Assistant Administrator for Water at EPA, to explain the differences in their statutory authorities that have made their regulations difficult to reconcile. “The Coast Guard works under the National Invasive Species Act and the EPA is working under the Clean Water Act, and those are very different statutes with different requirements, with

different state requirements,” RDML Servidio noted. Going forward, the admiral continued, “I think we can look to coordinate [Coast Guard and EPA ballast water treatment technology requirements], but again, the heart of the issue is the [National] Invasive Species Act is different than the Clean Water Act, and even though we might be able to address something short-

term, I am not sure, long-term” whether complete harmonization is possible.

Kathy Metcalf, Director of Maritime Affairs, Chamber of Shipping of America, testified to a difference between the Coast Guard and EPA regulations that has adversely affected the international shipping community, whereby the Coast Guard allows vessel owners to request extensions to ballast water treatment system installation deadlines if type-approved systems are unavailable but EPA does not. Mr. Shapiro acknowledged that “there are differences in the way our laws are structured which, in this particular case, give EPA somewhat less flexibility than the Coast Guard in addressing the current unavailability of type-approved systems.”

Other witnesses testifying before the Subcommittee included: Chris Grundler, EPA Office of Transportation and Air Quality; James Roussos, LaMonica Fine Food LLC; and Rod Jones, The CSL Group, Inc.

The hearing was the second in a two-part series exploring maritime transportation regulations and their impacts on safety, security, jobs, and the environment. As reported in the September 16 AWO Letter, Mr. Allegretti testified at the first hearing on September 10, 2013, to urge the Subcommittee to help ensure the prompt publication of the towing vessel inspection rule.

For more information, please contact Jennifer Carpenter or Craig Montesano at (703) 841-9300, extensions 260 and 297, respectively, or jcarpenter@vesselalliance.com or cmontesano@vesselalliance.com.

THE AMERICAN WATERWAYS OPERATORS

An Unworkable Regulatory System FOR BALLAST WATER AND OTHER VESSEL DISCHARGES

A tug-barge unit on a typical coastal voyage moving crude oil from North Puget Sound, WA, to the Port of Richmond, CA, faces an overlapping patchwork of federal and state requirements.

Requirements Applicable in Washington:

- Coast Guard ballast water and hull fouling regulations under National Invasive Species Act (NISA)
- EPA Vessel General Permit (VGP)
- 10 Washington-specific conditions to VGP
- Washington state ballast water management regulations

Requirements Applicable in Oregon:

- Coast Guard ballast water and hull fouling regulations under NISA
- EPA Vessel General Permit
- Oregon state ballast water management regulations

Requirements Applicable in California:

- Coast Guard ballast water and hull fouling regulations under NISA
- EPA Vessel General Permit
- 15 California-specific conditions to VGP
- California state ballast water management and hull fouling regulations

Congressional leadership is needed to replace this broken system with a uniform, science-based, federal framework for the regulation of ballast water and other vessel discharges.

SUPPORT A UNIFORM FEDERAL FRAMEWORK
for the regulation of ballast water and other vessel discharges.

U.S. Towing Industry Position Advances at IMO Subcommittee

On February 19, the Human Element, Training and Watchkeeping Subcommittee of the International Maritime Organization opted not to develop guidelines for personnel involved with tugboat and barge operations. In a major victory for the Coast Guard-led U.S. delegation, the Subcommittee decided to drop a proposal offered last year by the Republic of Korea and Malaysia which called for new training guidance to be developed for tugboat and barge personnel within the context of the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW). AWO opposed this proposal, commenting to the Coast Guard on the proposal's redundancies and noting that sufficient training and personnel requirements are already in place in existing international agreements.

The U.S. delegation was led by CAPT John Mauger, Chief of the Office of Design and Engineering Standards at Coast Guard headquarters. AWO and the Merchant Marine Personnel Advisory Committee were ably represented by Ira Douglass, Crowley Maritime Corporation.

For more information, please contact Kevin Dowling at (703) 841-9300, extension 264, or kdowling@vesselalliance.com.

VADM Zukunft Nominated as Next Commandant, New USCG Flag Officer Assignments Announced

On March 4, President Obama officially nominated VADM Paul F. Zukunft to be the 25th Commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard. VADM Zukunft, who currently serves as Commander-Pacific Area, will relieve the current Commandant, ADM Robert Papp, on May 30. VADM Zukunft is a 37-year veteran of the Coast Guard and has held various leadership roles, including the coordination of the federal response to the 2010 Deepwater Horizon Spill. U.S. Senate confirmation of his appointment is expected this spring.

Additionally, on March 1, the Coast Guard released the slate of new flag assignments and senior executive service [assignments](#). Among other changes, RDML (select) Paul Thomas will succeed RDML Joseph Servidio as Assistant Commandant for Prevention Policy as RDML Servidio assumes command of the Coast Guard's Eleventh District this summer. RDML (select) Peter Gautier will take on the post of Assistant Commandant for Governmental and Public Affairs, succeeding RDML Steve Poulin, who will become Judge Advocate General of the Coast Guard. RDML (select) Linda Fagan will assume command of the First Coast Guard District.

Appointments for the three-star positions, including Vice Commandant, Deputy Commandant for Operations, Deputy Commandant for Mission Support, and Atlantic and Pacific Areas are pending.

TSAC Approves Final Report on AIS Encoding

On February 25, the Towing Safety Advisory Committee unanimously approved the TSAC subcommittee report on AIS encoding for towing vessels. TSAC voted to accept this tasking in January 2013, in response to January 2012 guidance from the Coast Guard asking vessel operators to input 4-digit destination codes into their AIS to indicate the origin and destination of their voyage. At the time the guidance was published, AWO expressed concern that the complex coding structure, which includes unique identifiers for 39,000 different locations in the United States, was time consuming and distracting and could be detrimental to maritime safety. TSAC was tasked to make recommendations for improving the efficiency and clarity of AIS reporting. TSAC member Capt. Dan Nutt, Kirby Offshore Marine, LLC, chaired the subcommittee.

The TSAC report recommends that AIS data fields be simplified by requiring only a single identifier for towing vessels; that the Coast Guard reduce the number of AIS data fields that require regular changes by the vessel operator; and, that the Coast Guard not require AIS to be used as a "single-point" reporting system for additional information such as destination, estimated time of arrival, and cargo in tow.

To read the final report, click [here](#). For more information, please contact Brian Vahey at (703) 841-9300, extension 251, or bvahey@vesselalliance.com.

Sens. Menendez, Booker Release Statement on New Jersey's Salt Shortage, State Strong Support for Jones Act while Criticizing NJ DOT's Poor Planning

On February 25, New Jersey Senators Robert Menendez and Cory Booker issued a joint press statement (below) which stressed that the "reckless" calls to abandon the Jones Act in the wake of the state's salt shortage were short-sighted. The senators expressed strong support for the Jones Act, noting that the law "was designed to support America's strong shipping industry, while ensuring our country's readiness to defend itself against a national security threat. The lesson learned here should not be to repeal or blame the Jones Act, but to work in partnership to achieve a common goal.

"We are pleased to hear that the first shipment of rock salt arrived at Port Newark last night. When we first heard about the emergent nature of the State's salt shortage in media reports, we immediately contacted the appropriate federal agencies on behalf of the health, safety and well-being of New Jersey residents seeking help in expediting procurement and delivery of much needed rock salt.

"What has become clear is that the State Department of Transportation has fallen short in planning for and addressing its dwindling salt supply. There were numerous opportunities to

enlist our help, including at least one direct conversation with Commissioner Simpson, in which the apparent salt crisis wasn't even mentioned. In the face of an emergency, citizens of New Jersey expect its officials to do everything possible to protect the public from potential harm and in this case, the State has fallen short.

"It is our understanding that NJDOT's request to waive the Jones Act was denied because it was determined that American vessels were readily available to transport the salt from Maine to New Jersey, a development we were glad to help facilitate and expedite.

"We stand ready to act and to advocate for our fellow New Jerseyans at the federal level, but can only do so when we are informed of a potential issue. It doesn't matter if it's John Q. Public, a local mayor or in this case, the State. Had offers for help not been ignored, we could have worked in partnership, provided appropriate guidance on the best way to achieve their intended goal, and most likely avoided this unnecessary situation.

"We would caution those who would recklessly call for the abolition of the Jones Act, which has served for nearly a century to protect our national and economic security. The Merchant Marine Act of 1920—which prohibits use of a foreign-flagged vessel for transporting goods between U.S. ports—was designed to support America's strong shipping industry, while ensuring our country's readiness to defend itself against a national security threat.

"The lesson learned here should not be to repeal or blame the Jones Act, but to work in partnership to achieve a common goal. The State's poor planning should not become New Jersey residents' emergency."

Blumenthal Takes Chair of Senate Subcommittee with Jones Act Jurisdiction

On February 28, Sen. Jay Rockefeller (D-WV), Chairman of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation, announced the appointment of Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) as chairman of the Subcommittee on Surface Transportation and Merchant Marine Infrastructure, Safety and Security. This subcommittee has jurisdiction over the Jones Act and other critical maritime policy. Sen. Roy Blunt (R-MO) will continue to serve as ranking member. Outgoing subcommittee Chairman Sen. Mark Warner (D-VA) left his post for a seat on the Senate Finance Committee.

Non-Tank Vessel Response Plan Five-Year Reviews Restarted March 3

The U.S. Coast Guard announced that the agency has restarted five-year reviews of non-tank vessel response plans as of March 3. Owners and operators of non-tank vessels over 400 gross tons carrying oil as fuel were required to submit their plans to the Coast Guard by January 30 in order to continue operating.

Owners or operators who have already received five-year approval for their new NTVRP will not be affected by the Coast Guard announcement. Plan holders who received Interim Operating Authorization notices can expect to receive a full plan review by the end of July.

For more information, please contact Brian Bennett at (703) 841-9300, extension 279, or bbennett@vesselalliance.com.

Pacific Region

Washington Derelict Vessel Bill Would Impose New Tax on Commercial Operators, AWO Testifies

On January 17, Washington State Representative Drew Hansen (D-23) introduced HB 2457, legislation in the Washington State House of Representatives which, along with other measures, levied a tax of \$3 per foot on commercial vessels to raise revenue for the state's Derelict Vessel Removal Account. In the months leading up to the bill's introduction, AWO members and provided guidance to lawmakers on transfer limitations and insurance provisions that would reduce the likelihood of a vessel ever

becoming derelict. While many of these measures were incorporated into the bill, the proposed fee provision remained problematic.

Several recent high-profile derelict vessel removal projects in Washington have garnered national attention, including the former U.S. Navy Liberty Ship Davy Crockett, which took seven months to remove from the Columbia River at a cost of nearly \$20 million, and the F/V Deep Sea, which sank and caused an oil spill at the site of the country's largest and oldest

mussel farm in Penn Cove. These cases and others have severely depleted the Derelict Vessel Removal Account and have raised concerns among both state and federal legislators that the 153 remaining derelicts in Washington waters pose a threat to navigation and the environment.

Current funding for the Derelict Vessel Removal Program comes from an annual \$3 registration fee paid by each recreational vessel owner upon registration. HB 2457 seeks to increase funding by targeting commercial operators. On February 17, HB 2457 passed the Washington House of Representatives by a vote of 88-9 and moved to the Senate for consideration.

On February 25, AWO [testified](#) in opposition to the bill before the Senate Natural Resources and Parks Committee, stating that the fee was excessive and unfairly targeted responsible upstream commercial vessel operators. On February 28, HB 2457 was amended to reduce the fee from \$3 per foot to \$1 per foot for commercial vessels and was passed out of the Natural Resources and Parks Committee to the Senate Rules Committee, where it remains at the time of publication.

AWO will continue to work to reduce the fee and minimize its impact on members in Washington State. The final day of the Washington State legislative session is currently scheduled for March 13. For more information, please contact Charlie Costanzo at (206) 257-4723 or ccostanzo@vesselalliance.com.

Midcontinent Office

Chicago Maritime Day is March 13

On March 13, the International Shipmasters' Association and the U.S. Coast Guard Marine Safety Unit Chicago will host the [Chicago Maritime Industry Day](#) 2014 to provide firsthand, pertinent information on maritime interests in the Chicago area. The event brings together federal, state and municipal agencies that have jurisdiction over the waters in and around Chicago. The agenda has a towing vessel breakout session that will include:

- An update from the Coast Guard Towing Vessel National Center of Expertise on towing vessel inspection implementation;
- An update on implementation of the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW); and,
- Chicago Harbor Safety Committee objectives.

The event also includes an update from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers on GLMRIS and Transportation Identification Credential reader demonstrations. To view the full program, click [here](#).



Pacific Region

Washington State Department of Ecology Introduces NDZ Petition

On February 18, the Washington Department of Ecology and several other State agencies introduced a draft petition to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to make Puget Sound a No-Discharge Zone for all vessels. The draft petition is open for public comment until April 21, at which time the Department of Ecology expects to refer the petition to the EPA for final review. If EPA approves the petition in its current form, vessel operators in Puget Sound would no longer be able to use federally-approved Type II Marine Sanitation Devices and would be required to retrofit their vessels with sewage holding tanks at their first dry dock maintenance event or no more than three years from the effective date of the NDZ.

AWO strongly opposes the creation of a Puget Sound NDZ and AWO staff and members in the Puget Sound area have been engaging with Washington regulators on the issue for over a year. Throughout this engagement process, regulators have been unable to show that commercial vessels contribute to water quality impairment in Puget Sound. Commercial marine traffic is virtually absent from the areas of greatest water quality impairment on the Department of Ecology's own map for compiled water quality data.

Additionally, there are currently no shore-side pump out facilities available to commercial towing vessel operators in Puget Sound and the department has made no provisions to develop this capacity.

AWO has aligned with recreational boaters, commercial fishing interests, major ports, passenger vessel operators, maritime labor unions, area shipyards and other marine businesses to oppose the creation of the Puget Sound NDZ. Despite this opposition, AWO recognizes the importance of environmental stewardship as an industry responsibility and supports high standards for water quality. AWO's opposition is rooted in a firm belief that the proposed NDZ will do very little to improve water quality in Puget Sound. Through advocacy and education, AWO and its coalition partners will seek to reform this well-intentioned but ultimately misguided proposal. For more information, please contact Charlie Costanzo at (206) 257-4723 or ccostanzo@vesselalliance.com.

Atlantic Region

Buzzards Bay Environmental Assessment Released

On February 26, the Coast Guard's First District published the final Buzzards Bay Regulated Navigation Area Environmental Assessment. The release of the EA will allow litigation of unconstitutional Massachusetts laws establishing tug escort and pilotage requirements for vessels operating in Buzzards Bay to resume. The RNA was originally published in 2007.

A 2003 Massachusetts state law regulating vessel navigation was found unconstitutional in 2010 by the U.S. District Court for the District of Massachusetts. The court found that the Coast Guard's authority to regulate interstate commerce by establishing an RNA preempts a state's authority to do so. Upon appeal, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit found that the Coast Guard had erred in promulgating the 2007 RNA by not conducting an EA as required by the National Environmental Policy Act. The

Court ordered the Coast Guard to correct this infirmity by conducting an EA before resuming litigation.

The EA analyzes the environmental benefits and economic costs of implementing the 2007 RNA compared with other proposed alternatives for environmental protection in Buzzards Bay. As expected, the EA concludes that the Coast Guard's 2007 RNA appropriately regulates vessel operations and provides adequate environmental protection in Buzzards Bay. The release of the EA will allow litigation against unconstitutional Massachusetts state laws to resume.

The final EA of the 2007 RNA in Buzzards Bay can be accessed by clicking [here](#). For more information about the status of industry litigation in Massachusetts, please contact John Harms at (703) 841-9300, extension 292, or jharms@vesselalliance.com.

Pacific Region

AWO Pacific Region Holds Annual Meeting in Seattle

The Pacific Region of AWO held its Annual Meeting on February 19-20 at the Four Seasons Hotel in Seattle. The meeting drew a wide attendance from carrier members, affiliates and friends of the industry, including keynote speakers Commissioner Stephanie Bowman of the Port of Seattle and Steve Sewell, Maritime Sector Lead for the Washington State Department of Commerce. Mr. Sewell addressed the members-only Discussion Session, which also welcomed guest speaker Mike Moore of the Pacific Merchant Shipping Association, an AWO strategic partner. Several local Congressional offices, federal agency representatives and trade press journalists also joined the AWO membership for a wide-ranging discussion of critical issues for the tugboat, towboat and barge industry.

The meeting began on the afternoon of February 19 when AWO members and friends gathered for the Business Session led by Pacific Region Chairman Dan Nutt, Kirby Offshore Marine, LLC. After brief opening remarks from Capt. Nutt, AWO Chairman Buckley McAllister delivered a report on AWO progress in the areas of safety, advocacy, and public affairs. The group then heard from Port of Seattle Commissioner Stephanie Bowman, who discussed vital issues of port competitiveness and the importance of integrating the advocacy efforts of all sectors of the maritime industry. Charles Costanzo of AWO followed Commissioner Bowman with a report that addressed a busy legislative season in the Pacific Region and provided status reports on a series of regulatory initiatives in the Pacific Region, including an extensive discussion of the proposed Puget Sound No-Discharge Zone.

AWO members also heard from outgoing Sector Puget Sound Commander and Captain of the Port CAPT Scott Ferguson, U.S. Coast Guard. CAPT Ferguson, who has worked with AWO at Coast Guard headquarters and on both coasts and has been a trusted partner for the towing industry, will be retiring from the Coast Guard and transitioning to a full-time position with the Washington Department of Ecology. AWO congratulated CAPT Ferguson on his retirement and stated that the industry looks forward to working together to prevent marine oil spills in Washington.

Members also approved the slate of directors representing the Pacific Region as presented by the Pacific Region Nominating committee. The slate, which will be presented for approval at the Annual AWO Membership Meeting in April, includes: Bruce Reed, Tidewater Barge Lines, Inc; Susan Hayman, Foss Maritime Company; Rich Smith, Westar Marine Services; and Shawn Bennett, Baydelta Maritime. Jeff Browning, Sause Bros., was nominated as the alternate.

The Business Meeting concluded with a farewell to former Pacific Region Chairman Dick Lauer, who will be retiring from Sause Bros. this spring. Meeting attendees were amazed to see a high school yearbook photo of Mr. Lauer playing basketball with Dr. James Naismith, who invented the game in Springfield, Massachusetts in 1891.

For more information, please contact Charlie Costanzo at (206) 257-4723 or ccostanzo@vesselalliance.com.



Pacific Region

Pacific Regional Quality Steering Committee Meeting Held in Seattle

On February 19, the Pacific Regional Quality Steering Committee of the AWO-Coast Guard Safety Partnership met in Seattle to identify safety and regulatory concerns within the industry, benchmark progress on specific Committee goals and evaluate next steps for the ongoing vessel casualty Quality Action Team.

The Committee discussed two major international initiatives that will significantly impact affected towing vessels: the Coast Guard's recently published final rule implementing the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW) and the IMO Polar Code. While not directly related, these two regulations pose unique administrative and logistical challenges for towing vessel operators and will impact fundamental safety considerations such as vessel equipment, operations, and manning.

The group also addressed next steps for the Vessel Casualty Quality Action Team. The QAT has been stalled for the better part of six months due to the low frequency of high-severity towing vessel incidents in Coast Guard PACAREA. The Committee plans to revise the QAT charter in order to broaden the focus to include lower severity incidents which could provide leading indicators for casualty prevention in the area.

For more information, please contact Charlie Costanzo at (206) 257-4723 or ccostanzo@vesselalliance.com.

2014 AWO Spring Convention

Same Great Convention, New and Improved Schedule

The 2014 Spring Convention in Washington, D.C., is only a few weeks away, taking place on April 1-3 at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel. AWO is busy preparing for this important meeting, and there is much in store for the week!

When booking your hotel and flights for the upcoming meeting, remember that the schedule has changed based on member feedback.

The meeting will kick off on **Tuesday, April 1**, at 8:00 a.m. with the Common Issues Council meeting. Members from all sectors will gather to hear reports, updates, and guest speakers relaying valuable information on issues that pertain to our industry as a whole. This is a must-attend for all members, new and old!

All sectors are encouraged to attend the Public Affairs Committee meeting immediately following the Common Issues Council. This is always an engaging meeting with take-home applications for every AWO member, regardless of sector, region, or position.

The afternoon will continue with opportunities for members to gather with fellow sector committee members to discuss topics of specific importance. Agendas will be released soon.

After a full day of meetings on industry issues, the final session of the day is the Barge-In Preparatory Session, which will ensure that members are prepared and ready to be effective on Capitol Hill the following

day. Congressional staff members will be on hand to answer your questions about what makes a meeting successful. Consider this the pep rally for the big game!

And, what's a pep rally without a little fun? Well, we have a reception for that! The Spring Convention Reception will be held on Tuesday, April 1, from 5:30 – 7:00 p.m. Last year's attendance hit almost 300, with a great showing of Congressional and agency partners in attendance. We expect this year to be even better. If you plan to bring a guest with you to the reception, please contact Sarah Young to reduce wait time at the registration desk.

The Annual Barge-In will take place on **Wednesday, April 2**, with AWO members departing the hotel early Wednesday morning with their teams, which are well-planned for maximum efficiency and impact. If you want to participate in the Barge-In, it is very important that you register in advance to make sure you are placed on an appropriate team. Please make sure you are on the list of attendees [here](#). If you are not, please register today by clicking [here](#). Whether this is your first or your 100th time meeting with Members of Congress, you are welcome to participate; team leaders will be there to guide you every step of the way.

Thursday morning will begin with the 8:00 a.m. Annual Membership Meeting, immediately followed by the Board of Directors Meeting. There has been confusion regarding who can and should attend the meetings on



Thursday morning. Both meetings, held in concert, are vital to the membership of the organization and open to all members, regardless of member category. All are encouraged to attend.

Sponsorships help make all of these meetings possible, and there are many opportunities for your company to visibly support AWO's mission while promoting your company among peers. Would you consider sponsoring?

At the time of publication, the deadline for the guaranteed rate at the Mandarin Oriental had passed and the overflow rooms were full. If you would like to add your name to the waiting list or need suggestions for alternative arrangements, please contact Sarah Young. Don't let the full room block keep you from attending!

We hope to see you in just a few short weeks for an action-packed week of AWO meetings! For more information on meeting registration or sponsorships, contact Sarah Young at (703) 841-9300, extension 291, or syoung@vesselalliance.com.