

For Immediate Release
May 20, 2014

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AWO Celebrates 70th Anniversary, National Maritime Day *Emphasizes Safety, Stewardship and Service; Promising Career Paths*

ARLINGTON, VA – Today, the American Waterways Operators celebrates its 70th anniversary as a trade association, founded on May 20, 1944, to advocate for towboat and barge operators in response to changing national transportation needs and the new regulatory climate emerging during World War II. The association has grown into a national organization representing tugboat, towboat and barge operators on the inland waterways, along the coasts, on the Great Lakes, and in ports and harbors around the country. AWO President & CEO Tom Allegretti noted the association's seven decades of contributions to its members and to the country, emphasizing AWO's focus on safety, stewardship and service.

"Much has changed in the last 70 years, but one constant has always been AWO's unwavering commitment to ensuring the safe, reliable and efficient flow of the nation's critical commerce," Mr. Allegretti stated. "AWO and its members are deeply committed to their role as safety leaders and environmental stewards, and the standards that we establish for ourselves are very high. We take tremendous pride in the service U.S. tugboat, towboat and barge operators provide all day, every day, to meet the country's transportation needs."

"Marking this significant milestone, just two days before the nation commemorates National Maritime Day on May 22, allows us to recognize how our industry's past accomplishments provide a bridge to an even brighter future," Mr. Allegretti continued. "The tens of thousands of men and women employed in the domestic water transportation sector are dedicated, highly skilled, and earn a family wage. All of us depend on these hard-working individuals who help provide many of the conveniences we enjoy today, and our country is stronger and more secure because of their efforts and sacrifice."

Highlighting the quality jobs and the ladder of economic opportunity that the industry provides, Mr. Allegretti pointed to a mariner recently featured in *Parade Magazine's* [What People Earn survey](#). Towboat captain Martin Leake, based in Kentucky, earns an annual salary of \$133,000 per year. "Captain Leake's career is a great example of the path available in the tugboat, towboat and barge industry, a path on which an individual can begin as a deckhand and within a few years rise through the ranks to senior vessel positions," Mr. Allegretti stated. "In today's economy, jobs like this are very significant."

Mr. Allegretti acknowledged the billions of dollars U.S. vessel operators are investing in building new vessels and improving their equipment, technologies and practices to meet growing transportation demands and continually improve safety and environmental performance. “It is an exciting time to be in this industry,” he stated. “We are immensely proud of AWO’s accomplishments spanning the last 70 years, and we will work even harder to ensure that over the next 70 years, we continue to improve our service to AWO members and support the work that they do for our nation. I know that AWO members, and the hard-working men and women of the tugboat, towboat and barge industry, are up to the task.”

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