

For Immediate Release
March 14, 2014

Contact: Ann McCulloch, 703-373-2252
amcculloch@vesselalliance.com

Nearly 60 National and Regional Organizations Urge Swift Senate Consideration of Needed Vessel Discharge Legislation

ARLINGTON, VA – On March 13, a diverse coalition of 59 national and regional organizations representing a wide array of business, maritime and labor interests signed on to a [letter](#) to Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee leadership, Chairman John Rockefeller (D-WV) and Ranking Member John Thune (R-SD), thanking them for cosponsoring S. 2094, a bill that would establish a uniform national framework for the regulation of ballast water and other vessel discharges, and urging swift Committee consideration and approval.

S. 2094, introduced on March 6 by Sens. Mark Begich (D-AK) and Marco Rubio (R-FL), has 23 bipartisan co-sponsors, nearly one-quarter of the Senate. The bill would remedy the existing confusing, costly and ineffective patchwork of state and federal rules governing vessel discharges with which operators must comply.

“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,” the letter stated. “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, creates inefficiencies and uncertainty, and 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.”

Signatories to the March 13 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, American Waterways Operators, Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway Association, At-sea Processors Association, 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, 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, Midwater Trawlers Cooperative, National Association of Charterboat Operators, National Association of Manufacturers, National Association of Waterfront Employers, National Grain and Feed Association, 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, Purse Seine

Vessel Owners 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, West Coast Seafood Processors Association, Western States Petroleum Association, and the World Shipping Council.

In addition to Sens. Begich, Rubio, Rockefeller and Thune, cosponsors of the legislation include 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), Jeff Sessions (R-AL), Brian Schatz (D-HI), Patrick Toomey (R-PA), David Vitter (R-LA), Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) and Roger Wicker (R-MS).

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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