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Vessel Operators Praise Strong Bipartisan Senate Introduction of Needed Vessel Discharge Legislation

ARLINGTON, VA – The American Waterways Operators, the national trade association representing the tugboat, towboat and barge industry, praised yesterday’s Senate introduction of a bill calling for the enactment of a uniform national standard for the regulation of ballast water and other vessel discharges, legislation widely viewed as essential to ending the existing confusing, costly and ineffective patchwork of state and federal rules. AWO specifically called attention to the instrumental leadership of the bill’s lead sponsors, Sens. Mark Begich (D-AK) and Marco Rubio (R-FL), who introduced the bill with twenty additional bipartisan cosponsors.

“This significance of this bill, and the strong Senate support behind it, cannot be overstated,” said Tom Allegretti, AWO President & CEO. “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 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.”

Mr. Allegretti expressed the industry’s gratitude to Sens. Begich and Rubio, stating that “AWO members applaud their leadership in growing such robust, bipartisan support and ensuring that their Senate colleagues understand the bill’s importance.”

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) have all signed on as original cosponsors of the legislation.

“Establishing a uniform federal framework 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 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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