

February 17, 2015

The Hon. John Thune
Chairman
Committee on Commerce, Science and
Transportation
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Hon. Bill Nelson
Ranking Member
Committee on Commerce, Science and
Transportation
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Thune and Ranking Member Nelson:

The undersigned organizations include U.S. and international vessel owners and operators; fishing vessel, passenger vessel and charterboat operators; labor unions; industries that rely on marine vessels to transport essential cargoes in domestic and international commerce; marine terminals; and port authorities. We are writing to express support for S. 373, the Vessel Incidental Discharge Act, and urge that this important legislation be marked up and reported out as soon as possible by the Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation.

S. 373 is bipartisan legislation that will establish nationally uniform and environmentally sound standards for ballast water and other vessel discharges. Last year, identical legislation was co-sponsored by 32 Senators from all regions of the country, from Hawaii to Massachusetts. We are grateful to Sen. Rubio for reintroducing this legislation in the 114th Congress and to you for cosponsoring it, and ask for your leadership in bringing the bill before your committee for timely consideration.

S. 373 is urgently needed. 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. And, because neither federal statute preempts state action, 25 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, as companies have delayed investment in costly treatment technologies because they lack certainty that such systems will be acceptable wherever a vessel calls. It creates inefficiencies and uncertainty that add costs for shippers that rely on marine transportation to move essential cargoes. And, it has forced federal and state agencies to duplicate efforts and expend significant time and taxpayer money in an unsuccessful attempt to harmonize their requirements.

S. 373 would rectify this untenable situation by establishing a uniform, science-based federal framework for the regulation of ballast water and other vessel discharges that will benefit all segments of the U.S. maritime industry. The bill is good for the maritime transportation industry and the industries that rely upon it, good for the health of the nation's waterways, and good for the American taxpayer. We thank you for your support for this legislation and we respectfully request that you bring S. 373 before the Committee for markup as soon as possible.

Thank you for your consideration of our views.

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Sincerely,

American Association of Port Authorities
American Chemistry Council
American Great Lakes Ports Association
American Institute of Marine Underwriters
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
Cruise Lines International Association
Dredging Contractors of America
Gulf Intracoastal Canal Association
Infrastructure Council of the Illinois
Chamber of Commerce
International Association of Drilling
Contractors
International Longshoremen's Association,
AFL-CIO
International Organization of Masters,
Mates & Pilots
International Propeller Club of the U.S.
INTERTANKO
Jacksonville Marine Transportation Exchange
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
National Association of Charterboat Operators
National Association of Manufacturers
National Association of Waterfront Employers

National Grain and Feed Association
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
Seafarers International Union
Shipbuilders Council of America
Steel Manufacturers Association
Texas Waterway Operators Association
The National Industrial Transportation League
Transportation Institute
Tug and Barge Committee Port of NY/NJ
United Catcher Boats Association
Upper Mississippi Waterway Association
U.S. Chamber of Commerce
Water Quality Insurance Syndicate
Western States Petroleum Association
World Shipping Council