



For Immediate Release
August 13, 2024

Contact:
Anna Stallmann —708-476-1258

More Than 100 Executives Express Support for the American Offshore Worker Fairness Act (AOWFA)

In a letter to Senator Cassidy, leading executives from U.S. vessel operators, shipyards, supply chain members, and mariners union rally behind legislation to level the playing field between U.S. and foreign vessels operating in U.S. waters.

NEW ORLEANS, LA – Today, the Offshore Marine Services Association (OMSA) delivered a letter to U.S. Senator Bill Cassidy (R-LA) advocating for the enactment of the American Offshore Worker Fairness Act (AOWFA). [The letter](#) is signed by over [100 organizations](#), each representing dozens-to-thousands of American workers whose good-paying jobs are reliant on a fair and vibrant U.S. maritime industry.

“This broad support from across the offshore sector underscores the importance of AOWFA,” said Aaron Smith, President of OMSA. “This bill is crucial for ensuring safe and reliable domestic energy production at a time when the stakes are incredibly high. Without AOWFA and the parity it provides, foreign vessels and crews will continue to take jobs away from American mariners and jeopardize the nation’s economic stability and national security.”

Under current law, when foreign vessels operate in U.S. offshore energy projects, they are allowed to employ any mariner from anywhere in the world. In practice this creates a race to the bottom where mariners from countries with the lowest pay scales work on these vessels. Conversely, U.S. vessels are legally required to employ U.S. crew members, at U.S. wage rates. This disparity means that foreign vessels can operate at a significant premium and are therefore contracted by developers over equally capable U.S. vessels and crews.

AOWFA seeks to erase this disparity by requiring that foreign vessels employ American mariners or mariners only from the nation where the vessel is from. The legislation also would require these foreign mariners to complete the same U.S. Department of Homeland Security background checks that U.S. mariners are legally required to complete. By making these changes, the legislation brings fairness to the industry and gives qualified American mariners and shipyard workers an opportunity at earning a family-supporting wage without unjust competition.

“U.S. energy should mean U.S. jobs,” said Smith. “Our mariners are ready and capable, yet foreign vessels and crews are often chosen to cut costs, compromising both quality and safety.

Enacting AOWFA is a common-sense step to protect American jobs and strengthen an industry that is essential to American security.”

Additionally, American mariners maintain a valid U.S. Coast Guard license, deeming them ready to serve the nation and support military operations when needed. Failing to enact AOWFA would weaken U.S. military readiness.

“The U.S. maritime industry is vital to our national, homeland, and economic security,” said Smith. “On a level playing field, our companies, vessels, and mariners can compete with any foreign competitor. However, we cannot compete economically with companies that pay their mariners far less than what any U.S. mariner would or should accept. Enacting AOWFA is a step towards ensuring fair competition and protecting American jobs.”

Senator Cassidy has taken a significant step in advancing well-considered, common-sense legislation that will benefit the whole American maritime industry and have far-reaching homeland security and economic benefits, and this letter represents a significant show of support for that legislation. Congress can now enact AOWFA as an actionable solution to closing unfair loopholes and giving American mariners the fair opportunity they deserve.

###

*The **Offshore Marine Service Association (OMSA)** OMSA is the advocate for the offshore marine transportation service industry in the United States. The Association represents 170-member companies and their 12,000 U.S. employees based throughout the U.S..*