

# MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)



*"On Watch in Peace and War since 1875"*  
**M.E.B.A. TELEX TIMES**  
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*In this issue//Matson Ends Vaccination Requirement//ATC Vessels to Get Engine Upgrades//Coalition to Activate against Houthi Ship Attacks//Organizations Outspoken against "Immigration" Plan// Energizing American Shipbuilding Act Re-Introduced//USMMA Celebrating Female Cadets//AFL-CIO Comments on Workplace Deaths//CMES Course Openings, Classes Added//*

## **MATSON DROPS COVID VACCINATION REQUIREMENT**

Executive V.P. Claudia Cimini announced that M.E.B.A.-contracted company Matson Navigation will no longer require COVID-19 vaccinations for crewmembers aboard their domestic Hawaii or Alaska service vessels.

In the latest update to the company's vessel protocols, Matson encourages the booster for ship crew but no longer requires it as part of a member's fitness-for-duty assessment. The requirement had been in effect since October 2021, though the Union successfully negotiated generous incentives for vaccinated M.E.B.A. mariners serving in the fleet.

The Matson announcement follows similar recent policy changes in other deep-sea fleets including APL and MLL. As always, the M.E.B.A. will continue fighting on behalf of our membership to better their working conditions at sea and ashore.

## **ATC FLEET TO UNDERGO ENGINE UPGRADES**

M.E.B.A.-contracted Overseas Shipholding Group announced it has scheduled comprehensive lifecycle engine upgrades for the four Alaskan Tanker Company vessels. ATC is a wholly-owned subsidiary of OSG. MAN Energy Solutions SE will perform the engine and operational improvements on the ALASKAN EXPLORER, ALASKAN FRONTIER, ALASKAN LEGEND and ALASKAN NAVIGATOR that will make them more environmentally friendly while extending their serviceable lives.

The lifecycle engine upgrades include:

- Engine component replacements with newer, more fuel-efficient models, leading to reduced fuel consumption and lower greenhouse gas emissions.
- Installation of advanced control systems and optimization technologies to allow crews to operate the vessels in a more efficient manner, maximizing performance while reducing overall environmental impact.

- Capability to meet Carbon Intensity Indicator (CII) regulations without sacrificing operational capacity of the vessels for years to come.
- “Ready for Methanol” capability.

The upgrades will begin in early 2024 in conjunction with plans to reactivate the recently acquired ALASKAN FRONTIER, a tanker that had previously been slumbering in deep lay-up. The remaining three vessel engine upgrades will be conducted concurrently with scheduled vessel drydocking periods through 2026, which will mark the completion of the project.

### **COALITION FORCE TO MITIGATE RED SEA ATTACKS ON COMMERCIAL SHIPPING**

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin announced that a coalition of nations, including the U.S., is establishing a novel force aimed at safeguarding ships traversing the Red Sea. In recent weeks, vessels transiting the area have been targeted by drones and ballistic missiles originating from Houthi-controlled territories in Yemen. The severity of these attacks has compelled various shipping companies to reroute their vessels to avoid those areas until security concerns are adequately addressed.

U.S. Central Command reported two additional attacks on commercial vessels on Monday, involving an assault drone and a ballistic missile striking a tanker off Yemen. Simultaneously, a cargo ship reported an explosion in the waters nearby.

In announcing Operation Prosperity Guardian, Secretary Austin noted that coalition vessels will be strategically positioned to provide overarching protection to as many commercial ships as possible at any given time. Responding to the announcement, a Houthi spokesperson said the Iranian-backed rebels would continue targeting vessels linked to Israel off the coast of Yemen.

Over the past four weeks, Houthi militants have reportedly attacked or seized commercial ships more than a dozen times.

### **FOREIGN MARINER OPTION NOT A SOLUTION FOR CREWING NEEDS, SAYS TTD**

Several other organizations have weighed in following the M.E.B.A.’s pushback to recent remarks suggesting that foreign mariners should help crew up U.S.-flag vessels.

Overseas Shipholding Group CEO Sam Norton dispensed provocative remarks at a recent conference that indicated his willingness to employ foreign nationals on U.S.-flag vessels to help alleviate mariner shortages. Norton noted that those seamen would be provided an avenue to attain U.S. citizenship.

But M.E.B.A. President Adam Vokac rejected that notion and urged OSG and other employers to make commercial shipping more attractive and rewarding by sweetening wages and quality of life for their mariners aboard ship, thus making a life at sea more desirable.

This week, the Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO (TTD) came out with a statement that strongly condemns replacing American mariners with foreign workers. “The reality is that we do not

have a shortage of mariners – we have a shortage of mariners willing to work for less,” the statement read. “The quantitative and qualitative career incentive gaps for mariners, when compared to their colleagues, must be addressed. Stagnant wages are coupled with exhausting days at sea, driven by understaffing, and an isolating environment where a lack of Wi-Fi connectivity on ships means going weeks or months without being in touch with loved ones.”

The Offshore Marine Service Association (OMSA) also issued a statement objecting to the “immigration” proposal. “Such a strategy undermines the hard work and commitment of American mariners, posing long-term threats to the industry's sustainability and effectiveness,” they said. “It is essential to underscore that Mr. Norton's proposal is not a solution; rather, it is a pathway leading to the demise of the industry, loss of American jobs and revenue, and compromise of national security.”

### **LEGISLATION TO PRIORITIZE U.S. SHIP PRODUCTION & ENERGY EXPORTS IS REINTRODUCED**

Companion bills introduced in the Senate (S. 3467) by Sen. Roger Wicker (R-Miss.) and in the House (H.R. 6724) by Rep. John Garamendi (D-CA) would guarantee that fixed percentages of all exported LNG and crude oil would travel on U.S.-built, -crewed, and -flagged vessels. If enacted, the proposal would grow the U.S.-flag fleet and support thousands of new jobs for American mariners, shipyards, and the domestic maritime industry. Specifically, the “Energizing American Shipbuilding Act” would require that 15 percent of total seaborne LNG exports (by 2043) and 10 percent of total seaborne crude oil exports (by 2035) be transported exclusively on vessels built in the United States.

The initial version of the legislation was introduced in 2016 and has been reintroduced in each Session of Congress since then.

"Energy security is national security. There is a global energy demand and if the United States does not step up to the plate, our adversaries will fill the void," Sen. Wicker said.

Lead co-sponsor Sen. Bob Casey (D-PA) noted that, “Requiring an increasing share of natural gas and oil exports to be transported aboard American-built, American-crewed ships is an investment in our national defense, the economic competitiveness of American shipbuilders and mariners, and the communities they call home.”

If enacted, the bill could spur the construction of dozens of ships, support thousands of new good-paying jobs in American shipyards, and provide a boost to the domestic vessel component manufacturing and maritime industries. According to an estimate from the Shipbuilders Council of America, the enacted bill would result in the construction of more than 40 ships: approximately 28 LNG carriers by 2043 and 12 oil tankers by 2035.

M.E.B.A. urges the membership to reach out to their Congressional delegations to co-sponsor the legislation and help improve its prospects for passage.

### **USMMA UPCOMING CELEBRATION OF FEMALE CADETS**

The U.S. Merchant Marine Academy (USMMA) is trumpeting its upcoming anniversary of female cadets at the school. 2024 will be the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary since the Academy's admission of women into

the ranks. The school plans to celebrate that milestone for the next 12 months. A video message can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?si=GU--0uz8knJxsHcF&v=9oAstIC8aTQ&feature=youtu.be>

### **AFL-CIO: SURGE IN WORKPLACE DEATHS IS UNACCEPTABLE**

New data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics show the tragedy many families face due to a surge in both the number and rate of workplace deaths: In 2022, 5,486 people in the United States died because of their job. The job fatality rates for Black and Latino workers both increased compared with the previous year; immigrant workers accounted for 64% of Latino worker fatalities. In response to the newly released data, AFL-CIO President Liz Shuler said, “Every workplace fatality represents a family member who will never return home after a shift. An empty chair at the dinner table that never again will be filled. A loss that ripples through entire communities. We cannot and will not accept these tragedies as inevitable. Workplace deaths are preventable, but unchecked employers blame workers and treat people as disposable....

“...Maintaining a safe workplace should not be partisan,” she continued. “A bipartisan Congress established this right under the law more than 50 years ago. Significant hazards like workplace violence and occupational heat exposure are getting worse and need immediate attention. Now is the time for more resources, standards and agency oversight to ensure our loved ones have the protections they need to come home at the end of the day.”

### **OPENINGS FOR UPCOMING CMES COURSES: PLC & WARTSILA FLEX**

The Calhoon M.E.B.A. Engineering School announced that there are still spots available for the following upcoming courses:

1. The Programmable Logic Controllers class taking place from January 15-19, 2024.
2. The Wartsila Flex “Basic” class taking place from January 24-26, 2024

For each class, applications should be submitted as normal and should be sent via the CMES website ([mebaschool.org](http://mebaschool.org)), faxed to (410) 822-7220, or emailed to [applications@mebaschool.org](mailto:applications@mebaschool.org)

### **ADDITIONAL CLASSES ADDED TO CMES SCHEDULE: ELECTRICAL TROUBLESHOOTING & VIRTUAL TANKERMAN DL**

The Calhoon M.E.B.A. Engineering School has added additional classes to its 2024 course schedule due to membership need:

1. Two Practical Electrical Troubleshooting classes have been added to take place on April 8–19 as well as May 13–24.
2. Two Live Virtual Tankerman DL Classes have been added to the schedule to take place from May 13–17 as well as September 23–27.

CMES has received approval from the U.S. Coast Guard to teach their Tankerman DL course via Live Virtual. Students will attend class via Zoom from the comfort of their own homes. Since this course is taught live, students are expected to be in attendance during the hours of 0830 – 1530 ET Monday – Friday. Individuals who live in a different time zone should consider if they are able and

willing to attend during these times before they sign up for this class. Attendance is mandatory during class hours and anyone missing time will be considered absent and dropped from the class. The School has strict procedures they must follow per USCG approval. Final exams will be taken online during the last day of class.

Technical requirements and additional information for this course are provided on the School's website. Please review these to determine if you have everything necessary before registering. Applications may be sent via the CMES website.

### **HAVE A SAFE AND HAPPY HOLIDAY SEASON**

The M.E.B.A. wishes all our members, applicants, retirees and their families a Merry Christmas, happy holidays and a prosperous new year. M.E.B.A. halls and offices will close early tomorrow (Friday) and will reopen on Tuesday. Please follow up with your local Union hall concerning holiday closings to make sure you can complete your Union business.

### **NEXT MONTHLY MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS** *(All times are local)*

Monday, January 8 – **Boston@1200; Seattle (Fife)@1300.**

Tuesday, January 9 – **CMES@1430; Charleston@1400; Houston@1315; Oakland@1230.**

Wednesday, January 10 – **Jacksonville@1300; New Orleans@1315; Online HQ “Town Hall” Meeting@1300 (No Voting) – Register by emailing [mebahq@mebaunion.org](mailto:mebahq@mebaunion.org)**

Thursday, January 11 – **L.A. (San Pedro)@1230; NY/NJ@1300; Norfolk@1300; Tampa@1300.**

Friday, January 12 – **Honolulu@1100**

-----FINISHED WITH ENGINES-----



***M.E.B.A. does not tolerate assault, or harassment of any kind.  
If you see something, say something – The M.E.B.A. Emergency Hotline  
can be reached at 1-888-519-0018.***

*The M.E.B.A. is the nation's oldest maritime labor union, established in 1875. M.E.B.A.'s expertise and demonstrated track record of readiness, safety, and loyalty in answering America's call to action in times of both peace and war is unrivaled in the world. M.E.B.A. HQ – Phone: (202) 638-5355; [mebahq@mebaunion.org](mailto:mebahq@mebaunion.org). For publication and related inquiries (and to send photos & hot news tips) contact Marco Cannistraro, M.E.B.A. Special Projects & Communications – [marco@mebaunion.org](mailto:marco@mebaunion.org) Visit us on Facebook, follow us on Twitter and check us out on Instagram.*