

# MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)



*"On Watch in Peace and War since 1875"*  
**M.E.B.A. TELEX TIMES**  
*The Official Union Newsletter – "The Word to the Wise"*  
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## **CAMPAIGN AGAINST ØRSTED LEADS TO JURISDICTIONAL WIN FOR ILA**

The International Longshoremen's Association (ILA) scored a major victory this week following an agreement with offshore wind farm developer Ørsted US to assign disputed jurisdictional work to ILA Local 1411.

M.E.B.A. has been a presence at picket lines against Ørsted over the past months protesting Ørsted US after the company froze ILA workers out of their traditional jurisdiction of loading and unloading cargo in New London, Conn. The cause also gained international labor support from organizations such as the International Transport Workers Federation, International Dockworkers' Council, 3F Transport, Maritime Union of Australia, Co-Sea/Dansk Metal, and Ver.di.

This is the culmination of an eight-month battle to gain work jurisdiction at the New London State Pier (NLSP) for offshore wind operations. Although ILA Local 1411 members have worked at the NLSP for close to 100 years, Ørsted opposed the ILA's claim, and assigned the ILA work to the Operating Engineers. After numerous failed attempts to resolve the issue with Ørsted amicably, the ILA had no choice but to protest at various Ørsted offices.

"This is a monumental win for the ILA, Local 1411, and the entire rank-and-file of the union," said ITF President Paddy Crumlin. "Their eight-month campaign, fuelled by unwavering solidarity and strategic action, demonstrates the power of collective action in securing fair treatment and protecting jobs...This victory sends a clear message to employers worldwide: respect workers' rights and engage in genuine dialogue."

M.E.B.A. Secretary-Treasurer Roland Rexha, who also chairs the ITF U.S. Affiliates' Offshore Wind Taskforce, hailed the agreement saying that labor solidarity led to the winds of change. "ILA and other union members showed their resolve and resilience by weathering this challenge for over eight months before Ørsted finally did the right thing. We'll continue to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with dockworkers and keep up the fight to involve American mariners in emerging offshore wind initiatives, enabling the U.S. to become key contributors in this promising new sector."

## **CONGRESSIONAL CHAIR, SENATORS AND INDO-PACIFIC COMMAND NOMINEE WARN ABOUT DIMINISHED U.S. SEALIFT**

A Member of Congress chairing a powerful House Select Committee, a Senator at an Armed Services hearing and the nominee for the Indo-Pacific Command sounded off this week about the weakness of U.S. maritime power.

Chairman Mike Gallagher (R-WI) of the House Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party wrote to leaders of the U.S. Transportation Command and the Maritime Administration to highlight critical deficiencies in U.S. military sealift capabilities in the Indo-Pacific. In contrast, he noted, China has undergone an unprecedented naval buildup. Meanwhile, the aging and underfunded U.S. fleet of sealift ships must be relied upon to transport 90% of all Army and Marine Corps equipment to support large-scale operations in the Indo-Pacific. Rep. Gallagher called the current situation a “screaming national security vulnerability.”

The Congressman emphasized the significant gap between the U.S. and Chinese military sealift capacity. The U.S. currently has a total of 177 merchant ships, down from 600 merchant ships in 1990. By comparison, China maintains a 5,500-ship merchant fleet. Moreover, the average age of U.S. sealift ships is 45 years old. A 2019 Department of Defense exercise revealed that only 40 percent of the then 61-ship sealift fleet was ready for mobilization. Chairman Gallagher called for an immediate expansion of U.S. sealift capacity, requesting information from the Departments about the current sealift fleet and plans for fleet expansion. His letter has been posted on the M.E.B.A. homepage.

Meanwhile, during a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing on the nomination of Admiral Samuel Paparo to be Commander of United States Indo-Pacific Command, Senator Mark Kelly (D-AZ) noted his concerns “about the size and the capacity of our U.S. Merchant fleet and how this is a risk to our national security.” Asking for Admiral Paparo’s opinion, Sen. Kelly said that, “insufficient commercial maritime capacity impacts peacetime trade and supply chains, but the more important part of this is it will hamper our ability to supply our own troops in a conflict. This isn’t a capability that we can just turn on overnight with a switch. I mean we need investments now to be ready for tomorrow.”

In response, Admiral Paparo said, “I believe that the current size and scope of the U.S. merchant fleet is a vulnerability” that affects operational planning. Adm. Paparo currently leads the U.S. Pacific Fleet.

### **M.E.B.A.’S MERCHANT MARINE MEMORIAL; LATEST ON THE 4MF**

Chief Engineer and recent retiree Phil Strissel is the new Chair of the M.E.B.A. Merchant Marine Memorial Foundation (4MF) taking over for Bill Van Loo who remains involved in this worthy cause. As you know, the Memorial Park was created to honor fallen seafarers who have delivered the goods and answered the call of this country since 1775.

Members, applicants, retirees and everyone else are strongly encouraged to support the 4MF which provides upkeep and improvements to the Memorial Park located at the Calhoun M.E.B.A. Engineering School (CMES). The Park is shaped like a 600-foot merchant vessel complete with 5-ton anchors, a ship's bell, a bow section with plaques memorializing mariners and friends of the

M.E.B.A., and a six-bladed, 22-foot diameter bronze propeller that represents the stern section. The foremast, installed near the bow section, further adds to the effect.

The 4MF is a section 501(c)(3) entity under Internal Revenue Service rules, so all donations are tax deductible. Donations are always welcome. The Foundation hopes to do some work on the bow section this year and will likely schedule another Disc Golf tournament at the School to help raise additional funds. For more information visit the School's website at [www.mebaschool.org](http://www.mebaschool.org) and click on the Memorial link on the far right side of the home page. You can email [memorial@mebaschool.org](mailto:memorial@mebaschool.org) to get any related questions answered and you can send in a donation or make one at an M.E.B.A. Union hall anytime.

Check out this cool 3-minute video about the M.E.B.A. Memorial:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jDGCxvw9f0g>

### **UPDATED PLANS INFO ON ANNUAL PHYSICALS, BENZENE TESTS**

The M.E.B.A. Plans office has updated their website to include important information related to new Trustee-passed changes making the annual physical process more flexible for the membership and their families. Most importantly, please note that most deep-sea jobs will continue to require M.E.B.A. clinic annual physicals through 1/1/25. If unsure about your situation, call your local representative.

The updated site details the lab bloodwork and procedures covered as part of the physical. In addition, the site spells out the protocol for benzene tests, a federally-mandated requirement for those sailing on tankers. That information, along with an FAQ on those important subjects can be found on the Plans website located at <https://www.mebaplans.org/medical-benefits/medical-plan-benefits/>

### **WORKER-FRIENDLY VALENTINE'S DAY**

Not to alarm you, but Wednesday is Valentine's Day. As usual, you're probably helpless. Crawling into a fetal position and sobbing your eyes out isn't a real solution. Fortunately, Labor 411, a national directory of labor-friendly products, has compiled a list to help you show your love this Valentine's Day while supporting good jobs and fair wages.

***Union-Made Chocolate*** - See's Candies - Valentine heart boxes with hard, soft, and nut chocolate candies (BCTGM Local 125); Jelly Belly Candy Company - Valentine's Day gift boxes, tins, packs filled with taffy, gums, jellies, and other seasonal novelties under the Jelly Belly brand (BCTGM Local 125); Hershey Foods Corp. - Valentine packaging for union-made Hershey's Kisses, Hershey's Milk Chocolate Bars, Hershey's Milk Chocolate with Almond Bars, Rolo, Hershey Nuggets, and Hershey Filled Kisses (BCTGM Local 464); Ghirardelli Chocolate Company - Valentine's Day chocolate gift, tins, boxes, and packs filled with Ghirardelli brand chocolate (BCTGM Local 125); Sconza Candy Company - Red & White & Chocolate Jordanettes, Boston Baked Beans, Yogurt Raisins, Lemoncello Almonds, Chocolate/Yogurt Fruit & Raisins (BCTGM Local 125); Frankford Candy & Chocolate - Valentine candy toys, gift baskets, tins boxes, and packs filled with heart and other Valentine day gums, jellies, hard candy, molded filled, hollow and solid chocolate under the Frankford name (BCTGM Local 6); Annabelle Candy Company - Holiday seasonal specialties and bag candy including union-made candies like Rocky Road, Abba Zaba, Look, Big Hunk, and U-No. (BCTGM Local 125). ***Union-Made Champagne*** - Chase-Limogere (UFW, UFCW); Chateau St.

Michelle (IBT); Cooks Champagne (UFCW); Tott's Champagne (UFCW). To view more union-made products, visit the online directory at <https://labor411.org/listing-region/consumer-products/>

### **PHOTO CONTEST - TAKE A COOL PIC, WIN A COOL K**

The American Maritime Congress is running a Photo Contest until February 29, 2024 with a grand prize of \$1,000. Photos must have been taken after January 1 of last year. Contestants must be the sole creator and copyright owner of the submitted photo. Entrants agree that submitted photos can be used by AMC for advertising purposes, with proper attribution. Multiple submissions (up to five photos) are allowed. Photos must be in their original state, without alterations. Images should be no smaller than 1MB and no larger than 5MB. Winners will be contacted via the provided email address and must respond within three business days. Submissions will not be accepted after the February 29, 2024 deadline. Visit <https://americanmaritime.org/> for full rules and additional details.

### **LINCOLN'S B-DAY CLOSES HALLS ON MONDAY**

Halls will be closed on Monday, February 12 to honor the "Great Emancipator" Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln was born near Hodgenville, Kentucky on February 12, 1809 and began a dramatic and inspirational Presidency in March of 1861. The tallest-ever U.S. President (6'4"), Abraham Lincoln was a licensed bartender, lost eight elections during his 56 years, practiced law without a degree and invented a device to free steamboats stuck on sandbars. Honest Abe also briefly worked as a ferry operator and flatboat pilot, was beaten only once in 300 wrestling matches and frequently allowed his cat to eat on the table at the White House. The night before his assassination in 1865, Lincoln had a dream he was on a ship "sailing toward a dark and indefinite shore." Walt Whitman used that imagery when he wrote the famous poem "O Captain! My Captain!" about the death of our 16<sup>th</sup> President.

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

Friday, February 9 – Honolulu@1100

Monday, March 4 – Boston@1200; Seattle (Fife)@1300.

Tuesday, March 5 – CMES@1430; Charleston@1400; Houston@1315; Oakland@1230.

Wednesday, March 6 – Jacksonville@1300; New Orleans@1315; Online HQ "Town Hall" Meeting@1300 (No Voting) – Register by emailing [mehq@mebaunion.org](mailto:mehq@mebaunion.org)

Thursday, March 7 – L.A. (San Pedro)@1230; NY/NJ@1300; Norfolk@1300; Tampa@1300.

Friday, March 8 – 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.***