

MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)

"On Watch in Peace and War since 1875"



M.E.B.A. TELEX TIMES

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REPORT: TRUMP MULLING PUERTO RICO JONES ACT WAIVER

Bloomberg news reported that President Trump is "seriously considering" some type of Jones Act waiver for Puerto Rico in the island's bid to step up shipments of Liquefied Natural Gas.

A longtime Jones Act opponent, the Governor of Puerto Rico requested a 10-year waiver some months ago to permit incoming LNG shipments from the U.S. mainland onboard foreign-flagged carriers. The initiative is said to be part of the U.S. territory's plan to convert most of its power generators from diesel fuel to natural gas. The Bloomberg report notes that Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao and White House Trade Policy adviser Peter Navarro vehemently disagree with such a waiver, but others in Trump's inner circle, including National Economic Council Director Larry Kudlow, are pushing the President to accede to Puerto Rico's request.

A Jones Act waiver can only be granted when it is "necessary in the interest of national defense" which doesn't appear to be the case in this instance. Congressional Members from both sides of the aisle previously urged the President and the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security to oppose the waiver pointing out that it would serve to "help foreign entities, harm our American maritime base, and risk our military readiness." Instead, it was suggested that the President look into "recapitalizing an American-built LNG carrier fleet "which would be consistent with the President's 'Buy American, Hire American' agenda."

American Maritime Partnership Chairman Matt Woodruff issued a statement on the heels of the Bloomberg report noting that it would be "inconceivable" for President Trump to contradict his own 'America First' policy by favoring "foreign shipping interests over American workers." Despite the Bloomberg news, Woodruff said he "is confident President Trump who has championed and supported our American shipyards, mariners, and industrial base, would not start us down a path now that would cripple our national security."

SUPPORT THE JONES ACT!

Members, applicants and retirees are asked to let Congress know how important the Jones Act is to the nation's economy and national security. A pair of web links will help you easily put together and dispatch a message to Congress urging them to stand up for this important statute that helps keep the U.S.-flag fleet afloat.

There are frequent challenges to the tried-and-true Merchant Marine Act of 1920 by ignorant or unknowledgeable sources who typically recommend paring down, waiving or repealing the Act. Their arguments are mirrored by overseas shipping interests who would love to replace American workers and gain access to the U.S. domestic maritime trade. The tremendous loss of American jobs would extend to - and harm the capabilities of the U.S. shipbuilding and ship repair industries.

The loss of the Jones Act would give the green light to open up our coasts and inland waterways to foreign vessels and mariners. While U.S. ships and seafarers are subject to strict Coast Guard licensing and documentation standards that ensure that safe practices are adhered to, our foreign counterparts are not.

Navy League has an easy, pre-formatted (but editable) Jones Act letter that you can sign onto and send to your Congressional delegation in a few clicks. You can get to it by visiting <https://tinyurl.com/y3rlqf7e>. Another Jones Act letter, set up by the American Maritime Partnership, achieves the same effect. Visit <https://tinyurl.com/y2yd72y7> to get to the AMP letter. Five minutes of your time can really make a difference.

STOP & SHOP WORKERS BACK AT WORK AFTER TENTATIVE AGREEMENT

31,000 United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) members working at Stop & Shop supermarkets in New England are back on the job after a tentative agreement was reached this last weekend. Workers had walked off the job to protest the company's proposed cuts to health care, take-home pay, and other benefits. With a new agreement subject to member ratification, the five UFCW Local locals (328, 371, 1445, 1459, and 919) believe the pact will "preserve health care and retirement benefits, provide wage increases and maintain time-and-a-half pay on Sunday for current members."

SURVEY LINKS SENT TO M.E.B.A. WSF MEMBERS/APPLICANTS

M.E.B.A. appreciates members and applicants sailing in the Washington State Ferry system who are taking a moment to complete a brief survey concerning a number of important issues.

The Union is asking over 400 M.E.B.A. members and applicants in the WSF to deliver their input during a 30-day online survey concerning representation issues.

Last year, WSF members voted down a proposed dues increase that would have changed the unit's dues structure from a fixed annual cost to a percent of their base wage. The change was sought to reinforce the Union's ability to provide sustainable future representation. Though members failed to back that particular proposal, many indicated a willingness to support a more serviceable dues system if structured differently. The survey affords the opportunity for the M.E.B.A. to help capture member and applicant opinions on how the Union can maximize its functionality and better serve the membership.

The survey began on Monday, April 22 and continues until 0900 (Pacific Time) on May 23rd. Survey links were sent to members and applicants in the WSF at their email addresses on file at M.E.B.A. Headquarters. Members and applicants sailing for WSF who did not receive an email should contact M.E.B.A. Headquarters and supply a Membership Database Update Form with the Union to ensure that their correct information is on file. Further information can be sought from M.E.B.A.'s WSF Rep. Eric Winge at ewinge@mebaunion.org. Marco Cannistraro at Headquarters can also be contacted about the online survey at marco@mebaunion.org or (202) 257-2825.

MAKE SURE YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS IS ON FILE!!!

Members and applicants should ensure that Headquarters has your e-mail address along with your other contact information. If you haven't filled out an M.E.B.A. Database Update Form – or if your information has changed – grab the form off the M.E.B.A. website (www.mebaunion.org) located in the “Documents & Member Notices” section. Email addresses are also collected at membership meetings on the sign-in sheet, but *members must write clearly* as many addresses are typically scribbled illegibly.

Update Forms should be sent to the HQ Membership Dept. by mail, fax at (202) 638-5369, or e-mail at membership@mebaunion.org Since the M.E.B.A. Plans office in Baltimore and Headquarters databases are NOT linked, you should not assume that info forwarded to Plans is updated in the Union database and vice versa.

INDICTMENTS OVER OIL RECORD BOOK COVER-UP ON BAHAMIAN-FLAG SHIP

A federal grand jury in Wilmington, Delaware returned a six-count indictment against Chartworld Shipping Corporation, Nederland Shipping Corporation, and Greek Chief Engineer Vasileios Mazarakis for failing to keep accurate pollution control records, falsifying records, obstruction of justice, and witness tampering. The charges stem from the falsification of records and other acts designed to cover up the overboard discharges of oily mixtures and machinery space bilge water from the Bahamian-flagged cargo vessel M/V NEDERLAND REEFER.

According to the indictment, on Feb. 21, 2019, the NEDERLAND REEFER entered the Port of Delaware Bay with a false and misleading Oil Record Book that failed to accurately record transfers and discharges of oily wastewater on the vessel. The defendants were also charged with falsification of records, obstruction of justice, and witness tampering for destroying evidence of the illegal discharges and directing lower level crew members to withhold evidence from the Coast Guard. Finally, the corporate defendants are charged with the failure to report a hazardous condition to the Coast Guard, namely a breach in the hull of the vessel and resulting incursion of seawater into tanks on board that occurred before the vessel arrived in Delaware.

RELIEF IN SIGHT FOR COAST GUARD'S OVERBURDENED ICEBREAKER FLEET

After years of relying on an aging, inadequate fleet of icebreakers, the Coast Guard can begin its countdown for relief. With long-sought Congressional funding in hand, the recapitalization of the nation's overworked icebreaker fleet begins at Pascagoula, Mississippi's Shipyard VT Halter Marine. It was announced this week that the yard will design and construct the first vessel in the Polar Security Cutter (PSC)-class beginning with a heavy icebreaker set to debut in 2024. If options are exercised, the yard will handle construction of two additional icebreakers that would join the fleet by 2027.

The 2024 Halter newbuild will replace the overburdened 43-year old heavy icebreaker POLAR STAR, which barely managed to complete its South Pole escort mission earlier this year as part of the Navy's Operation Deep Freeze. While cutting a path to the Pole for the M.E.B.A.-crewed vessel OCEAN GIANT to resupply scientists at McMurdo Station, the POLAR STAR incurred electrical switchboard wiring damage and one of the vessel's two evaporators used to make drinkable water failed. As the mission progressed, ice operations ruptured the icebreaker's centerline shaft seal, allowing water to flood into the ship. Ship-wide power outages also plagued the crew while breaking ice in McMurdo Sound. On the return trip, the crew battled a fire in the ship's incinerator room that will further prolong its already scheduled in-port maintenance period.

Congressional leaders who have long fought for funding to recapitalize the icebreaker fleet hailed the announcement that the Coast Guard will receive the tools it needs for future missions in frozen waters. Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Subcommittee Chairman Sean Maloney (D-NY) said, “This is a great step forward and a long time coming. For too long, we’ve been outpaced by Russia and China as they’ve expanded their icebreaker fleets and encroached on the High North.”

House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman Peter DeFazio (D-OR) pointed out that, “Polar icebreakers are key to our Nation’s Arctic strategy, affecting everything from our national security and maritime safety, to our trade routes and ability to protect the environment.” He said the renewal of the icebreaker fleet will “protect our national sovereign interests and reassert the United States as a leader at both poles.”

USE M.E.B.A. PORTAL TO IRON OUT LWOP/VACATION DUES LAPSES

Some M.E.B.A. bargaining unit members pay dues by automatic Dues Check-Off (DCO). But when DCO members take vacation or (in the case of the Government fleet) Leave without Pay (LWOP), there are lapses in payroll where dues aren’t automatically submitted. Those members can go to the M.E.B.A. payment portal, select their bargaining unit on the “Check Off Catch-Up” section and make sure they remain as a member in good standing. Finally, a “Vacation Pay” option is now available on the portal. This will prove useful for port engineers and Union officials who can now make these payments online. Many members and applicants think the portal is the most efficient and advantageous manner to remain in good standing and extend a needed monetary infusion to vital Union programs. You can access the portal by visiting the M.E.B.A. homepage (www.mebaunion.org).

REGULAR MONTHLY MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS

Monday, May 6 – **Boston@1200; Seattle (Fife)@1300;**

Tuesday, May 7 – **CMES@1430; Charleston@1400; Houston@1315; Oakland@1230;**

Wednesday, May 8 – **Jacksonville@1300; New Orleans@1315;**

Thursday, May 9 – **L.A. (San Pedro)@1230; NY/NJ@1300; Norfolk@1300; Tampa@1300;**

Friday, May 10 – **Honolulu@1100.**

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The M.E.B.A. is the nation's oldest maritime labor union, established in 1875. M.E.B.A.'s expertise and proven 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. Visit us on Facebook. For publication and related inquiries contact Marco Cannistraro, M.E.B.A. Special Projects & Communications – marco@mebaunion.org