

MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)

"On Watch in Peace and War since 1875"



M.E.B.A. TELEX TIMES

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LAST CHANCE TO VOTE – SHIPPING RULE REFERENDUM ENDS MONDAY NIGHT

Members in good standing only have until the last minute of New Year's Eve to vote on the District-wide Online Shipping Rule Referendum. The online referendum began on December 1 and continues until midnight on December 31st. A letter about the referendum explaining how to gain access was sent to all members at their address on file at Headquarters. In addition, an email was sent to all members who have a valid email address on file with Headquarters. Members can email Marco C. at HQ (marco@mebaunion.org) should they experience any voting problems.

Members who did not complete payment of their Fourth Quarter dues by December 17th, as specified in the M.E.B.A. By-Laws, are not eligible to participate.

This is a one-question referendum on a possible change to the Shipping Rules to permit new Group III applicants to remain on the Port Relief List for one year from the date of their first registration. The Rule change is designed to extend the window for new applicants to seek viable shipping opportunities as they begin their seafaring careers.

A rank and file Tallying Committee will be elected at the January meetings to verify eligibility of voters and ensure the integrity of the process. Voting results will then become official.

NEW OFFICIALS ELECTED AT M.E.B.A.'s PANAMA AFFILIATE

Following elections at M.E.B.A.'s Panama affiliate Union de Ingenieros Marinos (UIM), Ariel Barcenas and Luis Yau Chaw will share the General Secretary position at the union representing Panama Canal engineers. UIM officers have essentially served on a rotational basis - both men have previously served in the top spot in past years. Vladimir Small Ortiz, who has also served as General Secretary in the past, has been elected as the organization's Pacific Coast Vice President. Ricardo Espada is the new Atlantic Coast VP and José Cruz will be Secretary-Treasurer.

The union continues to face real challenges with the Panama Canal Authority (ACP) since the Canal's recent expansion. The ACP is the agency of the Panamanian Government responsible for the operations of the Panama Canal. The International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) and the

Maritime Labor Alliance, which includes the M.E.B.A., have decried the ACP's heavy-handed treatment of Canal mariners who have spoken out against ACP cost-saving shortcuts that compromise worker safety. ACP has reduced tug manning to dangerous levels and stepped up overtime requirements exacerbating the fatigue factor. The National Transport Safety Board (NTSB) found that a recent collision on the Canal was caused by fatigue stemming from excessive working hours.

M.E.B.A.-CREWED MSC OILER COMPLETES SUCCESSFUL 10-MONTH MISSION

The Military Sealift Command fleet replenishment oiler USNS BIG HORN recently wrapped up a 10-month deployment which included participation in a NATO exercise that netted the MSC ship the prestigious "Order of the Blue Nose."

The 'Order of the Blue Nose', also known as 'Northern Domain of the Polar Bear,' is an unofficial honorary title presented to mariners and sailors who travel north of the Arctic Circle (66-32 South latitude). Civilian Mariners in the Military Sealift Command fleet are represented by the M.E.B.A., MM&P and SIU.

The ship sailed over 65,000 nautical miles during the deployment. They delivered 14.1 million gallons of marine fuel, 5.4 million gallons of aviation fuel and 712 pallets of supplies.

BIG HORN Master Timothy Porter noted that his ship provided logistical support for the NATO exercise Trident Juncture and Navy Carrier Strike Group 8 along with NATO Allies of the Royal Norwegian Navy and the Royal Danish Navy. These operations took the USNS BIG HORN throughout the British Isles, North Sea and North of the Arctic Circle. "USNS BIG HORN's crew made all the difference while deployed as our operations were conducted smoothly and efficiently," said Capt. Porter. "At times, we would be delivering aviation fuel to USS HARRY S TRUMAN on the portside, marine fuel to a 'small boy' on the starboard side, and conducting flight quarter operations for palletized materials, all at the same time."

COAST GUARD UPDATES STEPS TAKEN SINCE EL FARO REPORT

A year after the release of the Coast Guard's EL FARO Final Action Memo, the agency has issued a bulletin updating actions taken to rectify deficiencies in third party oversight and with the Alternative Compliance Program (ACP).

On Oct. 1, 2015, the 790-foot, cargo vessel, S.S. EL FARO was en route from Jacksonville, Florida, to San Juan, Puerto Rico when it succumbed to Hurricane Joaquin and sank in the Atlantic Ocean taking the lives of all 33 aboard.

The action memo found that the Coast Guard has not established a suitable framework for overseeing third parties to guarantee effectiveness of vessel inspections and surveys. You can view the FAM at: <https://tinyurl.com/y9rawm9q>

The bulletin notes that the Coast Guard has taken a series of steps in the past year including the establishment of a new division to manage its third party oversight and U.S. flag state responsibilities. In addition, it has updated its Alternate Compliance Program (ACP) and instituted new policies and procedures to address gaps. The Coast Guard's ACP is a voluntary alternate inspection process for U.S. flagged vessels to obtain a certificate of inspection by complying with international conventions. The agency also conducted extensive outreach to ensure a common understanding of new Coast Guard policies and procedures. You can view the bulletin at: <https://tinyurl.com/yxc2boa6>

NMC & RECs CLOSED DURING PARTIAL GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN

Because of the partial government shutdown, the National Maritime Center (NMC) and all Regional Exam Centers (RECs) remain closed. Customer walk-in service has also been suspended. Examinations and other REC appointments were cancelled, and REC appointment calendars are closed. Applications may continue to be e-mailed or mailed in and will be processed when the shutdown is over.

The following limited operations are being maintained during the shutdown:

- The Customer Service Center call center is open from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. EST, Monday through Friday. You may reach the call center at 1-888-IASKNMC (427-5662) and IASKNMC@uscg.mil.
- The NMC website will provide updates on NMC and REC operating status.
- Applications or mariner training provider documentation can be e-mailed or mailed and will be processed when the partial shutdown is over.

For questions regarding credentialing issues related to national security, please contact the call center at 1-888-IASKNMC (427-5662) or IASKNMC@uscg.mil.

TTD: “GOVERNMENT WORKERS ARE NOT POLITICAL PAWNS”

Larry Willis, President of the Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO (TTD), issued a strongly worded statement railing against the politically-motivated Government shutdown and its negative effects on hardworking Americans. M.E.B.A. is a founding member of the TTD which represents 32 unions in the maritime, aviation, rail, transit, trucking, highway, longshore, and related industries.

President Willis noted that, “Failing to fund nine federal agencies is nothing to boast about. The latest partial shutdown of our government will directly impact millions of federal workers, place a strain on our nation’s transportation system, and have broad economic consequences. Specifically, more than 420,000 federal workers will be asked to report for duty without knowing when they will be paid. Another 380,000 workers will be asked not to come to work at all, and face uncertainty of knowing when they will work again.

“Make no mistake: this shutdown was preventable and was directly caused by the ever-changing positions of the president. Because of this recklessness, for the third time this year, America’s federal workforce, and the people and communities who rely on government services, are being held hostage.

“Federal workers — including those who play a vital role in keeping our transportation system safe and secure — are real people with families to feed, not political pawns to be sacrificed on a whim. We urge Congress and President Trump to do what is right for our nation’s federal workforce, our country, and our economy and fully fund the government.”

VACATION BENEFITS - 2018 YEAR-END CLOSING

- Any requests for Port Relief and Vacation checks received after 12/17/18 at 5:00 PM will be paid on 1/2/2019. Tuesday January 1, 2019 is a holiday and the Outports and the Plan Office will be closed. It is always wise to plan ahead, so you should verify your specific Outport holiday schedule with the Plan Office Representative.

Split Your Vacation Payments between 2018 and 2019 - You can submit an Application for Vacation Pay prior to the end of the year and request that the payment of your vacation benefits be split. Two checks will be issued to you, one in 2018 and a second in 2019. The 12/17/2018 deadline applies to split claims also. The vacation benefits paid in this manner MUST be a continuous vacation period. Please contact the Vacation Plan staff in Baltimore at 800-811-6322 or 410-547-9111 if you have any questions.

REMINDER: INCLUDE ALL DOCS WHEN FILING FOR VACATION PAY

Members are reminded to be thorough when submitting an application for Vacation Pay at the halls and/or with the Plans Office and include all required documents, including Coast Guard Discharges and pay vouchers. Pay vouchers are used to track Social Security Tax maximums, to track wages as Medicare Tax increases and to check for any overlap days that can be identified. As detailed on the application itself, the following documents must be submitted along with your application:

- A copy of the stub portion of your last vacation benefit check.
- Coast Guard discharges and pay vouchers covering all employment since your last vacation.
- Pay vouchers must cover the entire period of employment and show all wages and tax deductions.
- Pay vouchers covering any periods of unearned wages since your last vacation.

Failure to submit proof of all accumulated work performed to the date of application could result in the permanent loss of vacation benefits earned on the employment not submitted.

You may also need to submit:

- A Carry-Over Vacation Form from your last vacation – if applicable.
- An original copy of the Converted Overtime Worksheet, if applicable, regardless of whether or not you are applying for converted overtime vacation.
- A letter from an authorized Union official granting permission for early return or excess sailing, if applicable.

If prior written permission is not obtained and an Officer returns to work early, they will be subject to a penalty which is loss of vacation benefits for the next six months of employment (180 days).

You can contact the Vacation Plan staff in Baltimore prior to sending an application. They can be reached at 800-811-6322 or 410-547-9111.

REGULAR MONTHLY MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS

Monday, January 7 – **Boston@1200; Seattle (Fife)@1300;**

Tuesday, January 8 – **CMES@1430; Charleston@1400; Houston@1315; Oakland@1230;**

Wednesday, January 9 – **Jacksonville@1300; New Orleans@1315;**

Thursday, January 10 – **L.A. (San Pedro)@1230; NY/NJ@1300; Norfolk@1300; Tampa@1300;**

Friday, January 11 – **Honolulu@1100.**

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