



# MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)

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## Hot Off the Press

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TOTAL PAGES INCLUDING COVER: 5

DATE: 1/12/17

# TELEX TIMES

# #02

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**MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)**  
**"On Watch in Peace and War since 1875"**

**M.E.B.A. TELEX TIMES**  
**The Official Union Newsletter**  
**NUMBER 2**

**JANUARY 12, 2017**

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**SPECIAL MEETING AT M.E.B.A. UNION HALLS TOMORROW**

M.E.B.A. will host Special Meetings at each of its Union halls tomorrow – Friday, January 13<sup>th</sup> for a ratification vote on a revised tentative agreement.

A tentative agreement with SEACOR Holdings covering vessels owned by bankrupt International Shipholding (ISH) failed to pass in a ratification vote last week. After voicing member concerns and with little remaining time in the process, the Union and SEACOR continued to work and reached a revised proposal late on Tuesday. The District Executive Committee called for a Special Meeting for Friday for a ratification vote on the revised proposal. The notice of the Special Meeting was sent to the halls and to member email addresses on Wednesday morning to allow at least 48 hours before the start of the meetings.

In most cases, each meeting will take place right after Job Call on Friday, but you should contact your local hall for confirmation. Since there are no classes scheduled at the Calhoun M.E.B.A. Engineering School tomorrow, the CMES meeting will begin at 1300. A Special Meeting quorum is five, including the Chair.

**CHAO EASES THROUGH CONFIRMATION HEARING**

Elaine Chao's confirmation hearing on Wednesday before the Senate Science, Commerce, and Transportation Committee went smoothly and it appears there will be no obstacle on her way to confirmation as the next Secretary of Transportation. Senators recognized she is well-qualified for the post and the hearing was devoid of any of the contentious questioning that has been part of some other confirmation hearings for the incoming President's cabinet appointees.

Chao has a strong maritime résumé. The former Secretary of Labor, she chaired the Federal Maritime Commission, previously served at the Department of Transportation as Deputy Secretary and spent time as Deputy Maritime Administrator. The daughter of a shipping magnate who emigrated from Taiwan, Elaine headed up the United Way and also served as director of the Peace Corps. Her husband is Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (KY).

At the confirmation hearing, she promised to address the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy's accreditation status soon after taking office. Aside from port infrastructure, there was sparse mention of shipping issues at the hearing. There were two Jones Act questions and Chao reaffirmed her support for the Act and expressed her belief that U.S.-flag shipping is crucial for national security and extending our reach overseas in peace and war. "I am a great proponent of the U.S. Merchant Marine fleet," she said.

## **DOT TO REINSTATE USMMA SEA YEAR**

The Department of Transportation noted that it will reinstate its U.S. Merchant Marine Academy (USMMA) Sea Year program aboard commercial ships after new directives were issued to protect cadets by addressing sexual assault/sexual harassment issues.

Earlier this year, DOT/MarAd announced that some USMMA Midshipmen won't participate in vessel shipboard training until a comprehensive plan to ensure safe working environments for cadets could be implemented. At the time of the announcement they noted the stand-down was not prompted by any specific incident. The Sea Year suspension was lifted a few weeks later for Military Sealift Command, Maritime Administration (MarAd) vessels and two training ships but not for commercial vessels.

A "Culture Audit" report undertaken by government consultant group Logistics Management Institute and released last week made a series of recommendations to safeguard cadets on campus and at sea. The Academy subsequently issued a four-page "Action Plan" laying out steps for a culture change at the Academy including the setup of a Sexual Assault response office, appointment of key oversight personnel, revision of performance plans, establishment of protocols and development of a prevention and response campaign.

DOT Secretary Anthony Foxx then authorized the resumption of sea year training on commercial vessels "in a phased company-by-company manner," as long as the Academy and MarAd ascertain that each company has complied with MarAd Shipboard Climate Compliance Team criteria.

## **M.E.B.A. PART OF NEW NAUTILUS SUPPORT NETWORK TO PROTECT MARINERS & UPHOLD MEMBER RIGHTS**

M.E.B.A. is part of a new agreement that helps provide mutual support for seafarers in trouble around the world using a 24/7 service. The effort was launched by 13 unions belonging to the Nautilus Federation.

Nautilus represents international mariners and shipping professionals with the objective of raising the voice of officer issues such as criminalization. M.E.B.A. is an affiliate of the Nautilus Federation.

The Nautilus unions this week launched the Joint Assistance and Support Network (JASON) developed to combat criminalization of mariners and to help guarantee that members' rights to fair treatment after accidents are upheld. It will ensure that reciprocal advice and support can be provided to union members if they are involved in an incident within a port, territory, territorial waters or onboard a vessel flagged in one of the countries covered by the agreement.

The JASON scheme will provide concise and practical checklists for members to use if they are involved in an incident to raise awareness of their rights under the fair treatment guidelines. Additional helpline support will be delivered in conjunction with the Nautilus 24/7 service.

The network can be accessed at <http://nautilusfederation.org/nautilus-247/> where you can Live Chat; You can also make a free call from 45 countries using the phone numbers listed on the

above webpage; SMS text message to +44 (0)7860 017 119; e-mail to [helpline@nautilus247.org](mailto:helpline@nautilus247.org); or Skype (username nautilus-247).

### **WWII MARINER COMPENSATION BILL IS INTRODUCED IN HOUSE**

Congressman Al Green (D-TX) has re-introduced a bill to provide surviving WWII Merchant Mariners with a one-time \$25,000 benefit. The measure, introduced in the last session of Congress gathered a multitude of co-sponsors but no action was taken on the bill. Rep. Green's bill, entitled the "Honoring Our WWII Merchant Mariners Act of 2017," has been tagged as H.R. 154 and referred to the Veterans Affairs Committee.

Merchant Mariners never received full veteran benefits despite their contributions. It took until 1988, supplemented by efforts from the M.E.B.A. and American Maritime Congress, for WWII mariners to be legally recognized as veterans. They were granted healthcare rights at Veterans Affairs' hospitals as well as burial flags, but because they weren't eligible for the original benefits under the G.I. Bill, they did not receive college tuition subsidies, home loan guarantees, pensions, or other provisions accorded to the millions who fought during World War II.

Like the bill introduced in the last session of Congress, H.R. 154 would compensate qualifying individuals who were members of the Merchant Marine between December 7, 1941, and December 31, 1946 (including the Army Transport Service and the Naval Transport Service).

### **UNION PLUS SCHOLARSHIPS**

You only have until the end of the month to apply for college education assistance money through Union Plus. Members, Retirees and their families can submit their applications for scholarships ranging from \$500 to \$4,000. These one-time cash awards are for study beginning in the fall of 2017. Applications, including essays and a reference letter, must be submitted by Tuesday, January 31 at 12 noon EST. Since 1992, the Union Plus Scholarship Program has awarded over \$4 million to students of union families. M.E.B.A.'s connection with Union Plus nets our members a range of benefits and discounts. Union Plus programs, which are available to M.E.B.A. members, retirees and our affiliates, provide a vast range of money-saving benefits and services. The Union is enrolled in dozens of moneysaving U.P. programs ranging from life insurance to financing children's educations. Our Members have been scholarship recipients quite a few times since the program began. Union Plus Scholarship are granted to students attending a two-year college, four-year college, graduate school or a recognized technical or trade school. Recipients are selected based on academic ability, social awareness, financial need and appreciation of labor. Award recipients will be determined by May 31, 2017. They will be notified by mail by June 2017. Visit [UnionPlus.org/Scholarship](http://UnionPlus.org/Scholarship) to get all the scholarship application details including eligibility criteria and to secure the official application.

### **SNUG HARBOR CONTINUES TO ASSIST MARINERS**

Though Sailors' Snug Harbor (SSH) no longer owns or operates a retirement facility for mariners in Sea Level, NC, Staten Island, NY or anywhere else, they still continue to assist mariners in their home communities. The non-profit organization financially aids retired mariners with a proven need of assistance. The Trustees of the Sailors' Snug Harbor (SSH) was incorporated in 1806 as the result of a bequest made by Captain Robert Richard Randall, a wealthy New York merchant. Today, Snug Harbor offers support to career mariners who can demonstrate they have a need for financial assistance and meet the following requirements:

- 2555 days of deep sea time, at least 5 years on U.S.-flagged ships or 14 years working on inland waters;
- 65 years of age or older or on disability (Some exceptions may be made);
- Proven need for financial assistance;
- An individual with at least \$50,000 in assets will not be eligible (primary residence excluded);
- All public benefits available to a mariner must be accessed (if eligible) before any subsidy from SSH is approved. For example, VA benefits, Medicaid, food stamps etc.

More than 16,500 mariners have been assisted since its inception in the early nineteenth century. If you have any questions or are in need of assistance, please call an SSH Mariner Counselor at 1-888-257-5456. The web site [www.thesailorssnugharbor.org](http://www.thesailorssnugharbor.org) includes the application.

### **SIGN UP FOR M.E.B.A. VACATION PLAN DIRECT DEPOSIT**

Designed for convenience, M.E.B.A. members can help themselves by taking advantage of the Vacation Plan Direct Deposit that will help save them time and ease Plans processing costs. Authorization forms are available from the Plans Office, Plans Outport Offices and at the Plans' website – [www.mebaplans.org](http://www.mebaplans.org) (Forms, Vacation). Complete details are available on the Plans' site as well. Contact (800) 811-6322 or [vacation@mebaplans.org](mailto:vacation@mebaplans.org) for more info.

### **REGULAR MONTHLY MEETINGS**

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

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

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

*Thursday, February 9* – L.A.@1230; NY/NJ@1300; Norfolk@1300; Tampa@1300;

*Friday, February 10* – Honolulu@1100.

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