

# 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//AMHS Study Warns against privatization//Meeting with Rep. Luria//M.E.B.A. Heading toward the South Pole//NMC Exam Process Updates//Piracy is Down but Kidnappings are Up//Inclement Weather Sapped WSF Ridership Last Year//Union Plus Scholarships//MLK Day Closings//

### STATE-SPONSORED AMHS STUDY CONFIRMS FOLLY OF PRIVATIZATION

A long-awaited study commissioned by the State of Alaska has concluded that the privatization of the Alaska Marine Highway System is not feasible if minimum levels of service are to be maintained. The State ordered the study from consulting firm Northern Economics meant to help shape the future of the ferry fleet. The report found that "even without the stipulation of minimum service levels" it would be unlikely for a private company "to operate any of the existing routes at break-even levels."

Last year, Alaska Governor Mike Dunleavy helped spearhead massive State budget cuts impacting ferry fleet operations that led to diminished service for Alaskans, many who live in remote locations. The ferry fleet serves as a crucial connector for Alaskan communities spread out over 3,100 miles.

The study also listed a series of unenviable options the State could pursue to further slash AMHS costs while maintaining a semblance of ferry service. The report is accessible at [http://dot.alaska.gov/project\\_info/](http://dot.alaska.gov/project_info/)

The State received the report in October but it was only released to the public this week. Upon its release, the State noted that the report would remain in "draft status" as the conversation about the future of the ferry fleet continues.

To keep up with efforts to resuscitate the embattled ferry system, you can visit [www.friendsofamhs.org](http://www.friendsofamhs.org). The site catalogs the latest news and developments at AMHS and urges residents to contact their lawmakers to restore funding. Check out the website for more. They can also be emailed at [FriendsAMHS@yahoo.com](mailto:FriendsAMHS@yahoo.com) or reached by phone at (907) 419-7113.

### MEETING WITH REP. LURIA

M.E.B.A. and representatives from several other maritime labor unions had a good meeting with Member of Congress Elaine Luria on Wednesday at our Headquarters in Washington D.C. The Democrat represents Virginia's 2<sup>nd</sup> District which comprises the Hampton Roads area including Virginia Beach, Williamsburg and parts of Norfolk, VA. Rep. Luria served as an officer in the U.S. Navy for 20 years and commanded combat ships. She has an impressive grasp of our complicated industry, and is a strong proponent of the U.S. Merchant Marine. Discussion at Wednesday's meeting touched on issues such as the Jones Act and cargo preference as well as the projected mariner shortage. She discussed the recent turbo activation and the subsequent U.S. Transportation Command report detailing their concerns about the nation's capability to satisfy future sealift needs.

Rep. Luria is the Vice-Chair on the Armed Services' Seapower Subcommittee and also sits on the Military Personnel Subcommittee. She is a member of the Veterans Affairs Committee as well.

Supporting lawmakers who understand the value of U.S.-flag shipping to our nation's security and economy is the principal focus of M.E.B.A.'s Political Action Fund. Rep. Luria has visited our Union hall in Norfolk and our membership there understands the importance of an educated politician who fights for our issues.

It's a great idea for applicants, members and retirees to contribute to the M.E.B.A. PAF. You can stop by a local union hall or visit the M.E.B.A. website to sign up for regular contributions. From the "Members" tab on the M.E.B.A. Homepage ([www.mebaunion.org](http://www.mebaunion.org)) select "Political Action Fund."

### **M.E.B.A. OFFICERS SAILING FOR THE POLE IN RESUPPLY MISSION**

M.E.B.A. officers are headed to the end of the earth as the Waterman-managed heavy lift vessel M/V OCEAN GIANT is sailing toward the South Pole this week as part of an annual resupply mission.

The Military Sealift Command once again contracted the ship for the Joint Task Force Antarctica mission called Operation Deep Freeze to reprovision scientists at McMurdo Station. MSC has supported the mission since 1955, the year the Station was established.

M.E.B.A. Chief Engineer Dave Morris, who headed up the engine room on last year's mission, is reprising his role in Operation Deep Freeze 2020. 1<sup>st</sup> A/E Devin Savoie and 2<sup>nd</sup> A/E Nicholas Cabral are joining him as are MM&P deck officers and an SIU unlicensed crew. During last year's mission Chief Morris sent us some great photos from the mission that were included in the *Marine Officer* write-up which has been posted on the M.E.B.A. website accessed here [www.mebaunion.org/assets/1/6/Ocean\\_Giant\\_Mission\\_-\\_M.O.\\_2019.pdf](http://www.mebaunion.org/assets/1/6/Ocean_Giant_Mission_-_M.O._2019.pdf) or by visiting [www.mebaunion.org](http://www.mebaunion.org) and clicking "Selected M.O. Articles" under the "News" tab.

MSC said the cargo being shipped to the Pole includes food, mechanical parts, vehicles, construction materials, office supplies, electronic equipment, and much more. It comprises 80 percent of the supplies needed for the year at the Station. The OCEAN GIANT loaded up and departed Port Hueneme on Christmas Eve then made a stop in Christchurch, New Zealand, where the ship loaded additional cargo. The vessel is scheduled to reach McMurdo on Wednesday. OCEAN GIANT received a floating causeway that will be used to move cargo and retrograde items to and from the ship during cargo operation in Antarctica. In the past, the cargo offloads took place at the McMurdo ice pier but damage from the harsh climate prompted mission officials to instead rely on the floating causeway.

### **2020 MARINER EXAMINATION PROCESS UPDATES**

The National Maritime Center (NMC) is implementing a series of changes at all Regional Examination Centers (RECs) to take effect on Monday, April 6, 2020:

Walk-in services for examinations will no longer be offered. All examinations must be scheduled at least 2 business days in advance. After receiving a letter from the NMC indicating you are approved to test, schedule an examination appointment by: Using the Schedule Exam/REC Appointment link on the Examinations page of the NMC Website ([www.dco.uscg.mil/national\\_maritime\\_center](http://www.dco.uscg.mil/national_maritime_center));

Calling the NMC Contact Center at 1-888-IASKNMC (427-5662); Or by contacting the NMC Contact Center by chat.

All RECs will have two examination periods daily, a 3 ½-hour a.m. (morning) session and a 3 ½-hour p.m. (afternoon) session with a minimum ½-hour break between sessions. See the REC webpage for specific hours. Mariners who finish a module early may take additional modules during an examination period but will not be given additional time to complete the extra modules. Requests for additional modules during a specific examination period are coordinated with the REC staff at the time of examination. There will be no changes to the First Class Pilot examination process. Appointments are highly recommended for all other services. See the REC webpage for facility access requirements.

Should you have any questions or concerns visit the Examinations or Frequently Asked Questions webpages, or contact the NMC Customer Service Center by e-mailing [IASKNMC@uscg.mil](mailto:IASKNMC@uscg.mil), by using the NMC online chat system, or by calling 1-888-IASKNMC (427-5662).

### **PIRACY DOWN BUT KIDNAPPINGS UP, SAYS NEW REPORT**

Despite overall piracy incidents declining in 2019, there was an alarming increase in crew kidnappings across the Gulf of Guinea, according to the International Chamber of Commerce's International Maritime Bureau's (IMB) annual piracy report.

The number of crew kidnapped in the Gulf of Guinea increased more than 50 percent from 78 in 2018 to 121 in 2019. This equates to over 90 percent of global kidnappings reported at sea with 64 crew members kidnapped across six separate incidents in the last quarter of 2019 alone. The region accounted for 64 incidents including all four vessel hijackings that occurred in 2019, as well as 10 out of 11 vessels that reported coming under fire.

In December of last year, the IMB urged ships' crews to be extra vigilant. On December 15, around six heavily armed pirates boarded a product tanker underway approximately 118 nautical miles off Cotonou, Benin, kidnapping 20 seafarers and destroying some equipment on board. The pirates left a single crew member, a deck cadet, behind. The tanker was sailing from Luanda, Angola to Lome in Togo when the pirates struck. The incident came days after 19 crew members from a VLCC were kidnapped about 100 nautical miles south of Bonny Island offshore Nigeria on December 3. In this case, seven crew members were left behind.

The U.S. Maritime Administration has also issued an Advisory concerning piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, noting that many operations occur around the Niger Delta and target vessels (tankers, tugs, offshore supply vessels, and cargo vessels) with expatriate crew, due to their potentially high ransom value. Motherships have been used to support kidnap for ransom operations up to 150 nautical miles offshore. The pirates have been known to fire upon targeted vessels prior to attempting to board them. They generally kidnap two to six high-value crewmembers to include the Master, Chief Engineer, and any Western crewmembers.

In 2019, IMB's Piracy Reporting Center received 162 incidents of piracy and armed robbery against ships worldwide, in comparison to 201 reported incidents in 2018. The incidents included four hijacked vessels, 11 vessels fired upon, 17 attempted attacks and 130 vessels boarded.

## **INCLEMENT WEATHER BROUGHT DOWN 2019 WSF RIDERSHIP TOTALS**

For the first time in seven years, annual ridership aboard Washington State Ferries declined in 2019, dropping by 800,000 customers – 3.2% – to 23.9 million. Severe winter weather, construction in and around ferry terminals and increased ferry and transit options are considered the main reasons for the decrease. More than a third of the year-to-year decline came in February, when several snowstorms hit the Puget Sound region, causing many people to cancel or delay travel plans. During that time, there were only 10,000 ferry customers on some days, compared to 50,000 to 60,000 average daily winter ridership.

WSF customers took 162,136 trips aboard state ferries in 2019, travelling nearly 1 million miles – or more than 1,600 round trip drives from Seattle to Spokane and back. Nearly 1.2 million vehicle reservations were made for the Anacortes/San Juan Islands, Anacortes/Sidney, British Columbia and Port Townsend Coupeville routes last year, a 5.3% increase from 2018. State ferry ridership is still forecast to grow by 30% to all-time highs by 2040. Last year, WSF released its 2040 Long Range Plan, which calls for 16 new vessels over the next 20 years to support this projected demand and maintain reliable service.

## **LAST CHANCE TO APPLY FOR UNION PLUS SCHOLARSHIPS**

M.E.B.A. families have until January 31, 2020 to apply for college education assistance money through Union Plus. M.E.B.A. members, retirees and their families - as well as members of affiliated M.E.B.A. unions - are eligible courtesy of the Union's enrollment in dozens of moneysaving U.P. programs ranging from life insurance to financing children's educations. Visit [unionplus.org/scholarship](http://unionplus.org/scholarship) for more. Families of M.E.B.A. members or affiliated members are among past scholarship money recipients. 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.

Applications can be submitted up until Tuesday January 31, 2020, at noon (EST). Those arriving after the deadline will not be considered. The award date is May 31, 2020. During the first week of June 2020, award recipients will be notified. A GPA of 3.0 or higher is recommended. The required essays can account for up to half your total score. Scholarship applicants are judged by a committee of impartial post-secondary educators. Amounts range from \$500 to \$4,000. These one-time cash awards are for study beginning in the Fall of 2020. Students may re-apply each year. Get the official application and all the details including eligibility criteria by visiting [unionplus.org/scholarship](http://unionplus.org/scholarship) Since 1991, the Union Plus Scholarship Program has awarded more than \$4.5 million to students of union families. Over 3,000 union families have benefited from the program.

## **M.E.B.A. HALLS AND OFFICES CLOSED MONDAY TO HONOR MLK**

M.E.B.A. Union halls and offices will be closed on Monday, January 20<sup>th</sup> in honor of Martin Luther King, Jr. Along with his exceptional leadership in advancing civil rights, MLK was a champion of workers and of those seeking union recognition. He believed that unionization is one of our most vital civil rights. At the Illinois AFL-CIO Convention in 1965, King declared, "The labor movement was the principal force that transformed misery and despair into hope and progress. Out of its bold struggles, economic and social reform gave birth to unemployment insurance, old-age pensions, government relief for the destitute and, above all, new wage levels that meant not mere survival but a tolerable life"

## **REGULAR MONTHLY MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS**

Monday, February 3 – Boston@1200; Seattle (Fife)@1300;  
Tuesday, February 4 – CMES@1430; Charleston@1400; Houston@1315; Oakland@1230;  
Wednesday, February 5 – Jacksonville@1300; New Orleans@1315;  
Thursday, February 6 – L.A. (San Pedro)@1230; NY/NJ@1300; Norfolk@1300; Tampa@1300;  
Friday, February 7 – 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](mailto:mebahq@mebaunion.org). Visit us on Facebook. 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.*