

MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)



"On Watch in Peace and War since 1875"
M.E.B.A. TELEX TIMES
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NOLA'S GIFFORD IS RETIRING; NEW DISPATCHER/REP. SOUGHT

Dan Gifford announced that he is retiring from his post at the M.E.B.A. New Orleans Union hall where he has ably served as Representative/Dispatcher for the past six years. Dan has been part of the M.E.B.A. for 35 years sailing as a Chief Engineer for Keystone and various shipping companies before his retirement from the sea prior to working for us shoreside. In addition, New Orleans Plans Representative Mary Starita, who has been part of the M.E.B.A. for over 40 years, felt the time was right to join Dan in retirement. Their collective contributions to the M.E.B.A. are greatly appreciated and we extend our thanks to two M.E.B.A. stalwarts!

While Mary wrapped up her service this week, Dan has agreed to stay on a few more weeks to help train his replacement. The next NOLA Representative/Dispatcher is in demand! Any member or retiree who wishes to be considered for the position should send a brief résumé in short form to Gulf Coast Vice President Adam Smith at asmith@mebaunion.org or Secretary-Treasurer Roland Rexha at rrexha@mebaunion.org.

Meanwhile, those utilizing the NOLA hall for Plans matters can route their business to the M.E.B.A. Plans office in Baltimore, MD. That office can be contacted at (800) 811-6322 and vacation-specific business can be emailed to vacation@mebaplans.org

LABOR LEADER, SIU PRESIDENT EMERITUS MIKE SACCO: 1937-2023

The Seafarers International Union announced that SIU President Emeritus Mike Sacco crossed the bar in St. Louis on Thursday, December 28 at the age of 86. It was reported that he passed of natural causes surrounded by family, ten months after his retirement from the union. Sacco had served as SIU's President for nearly 35 years and had been a tireless and vocal advocate for the US maritime industry.

Mike Sacco's association with the SIU dated back to 1958 when he shipped out on various vessels before transitioning ashore in the 1960s where he assumed a number of union roles, including patrolman, port agent, and headquarters representative. He was the longest serving SIU President, having taken over in 1988 following the death of President Frank Drozak.

A Brooklyn, New York native, Sacco's commitment to service also included a stint in the U.S. Air Force from 1954 to 1958.

M.E.B.A. President Adam Vokac was saddened by the news but expressed his appreciation and admiration for Sacco's strong leadership during his long career battling on behalf of U.S. mariners and the labor movement. Extending the M.E.B.A.'s condolences to the SIU, Vokac noted, "Mike was a towering figure who had a profound impact on an industry that relies on the resilience and strength of its workforce. Beyond the boardrooms and negotiating tables, he recognized the interconnectedness of the maritime community and always guided his union steadily through turbulent seas and calm waters alike. His legacy looms large."

The family is requesting that in lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the [Tony Sacco Memorial Scholarship Fund-Charleston Port & Seafarers Society](#) or to [St. Jude Children's Hospital](#). There is a visitation tomorrow - Friday, January 5 at the Kutis Funeral Home at 5255 Lemay Ferry St. Louis, Missouri from 3 pm – 8 pm. A funeral mass will be held the next day - Saturday January 6 at St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church at 4556 Telegraph Rd. in St. Louis at 11:00 am.

ITF President Paddy Crumlin noted, "What a character Mike was. You could take the man out of Brooklyn, but you couldn't take Brooklyn out of the man. Charismatic, tough, determined, a great and inspirational leader with a sense of humour that always seemed to sum up the situation perfectly. He will be greatly missed."

APL ANNOUNCES CONTINUED REJUVENATION OF ITS U.S.-FLAG FLEET

American President Lines announced that it is continuing to bring in younger vessels to replace ships in its fleet that will also meet new requirements for CO² emissions. APL has nine vessels in its fleet that are enrolled in the Maritime Security Program (MSP). MSP age limits require that older vessels be replaced in the current program before reaching 25 years of age.

Last year, the company replaced the APL GULF EXPRESS with the 14-years younger APL EAGLE that was plucked from the CMA CGM international fleet. The year before, the CMA-CGM DAKAR took the place of the aging APL SAIPAN. In 2021, the CMA CGM HERODOTE (since renamed APL ISLANDER) took over for the old APL GUAM.

Now, the company has announced a tentative schedule to freshen up the rest of the fleet which may include newly constructed vessels. They are planning to bring in two new ships to be named PRESIDENT ADAMS and PRESIDENT GRANT in February and April, respectively. Those vessels will replace the PRESIDENT TRUMAN and PRESIDENT WILSON which are scheduled to flag-out sometime in May. Next, the company plans to welcome the PRESIDENT REAGAN sometime in June and drop the PRESIDENT FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT into the CMA CGM international fleet in July.

Under the tentative schedule, the PRESIDENT GEORGE BUSH will be welcomed into the U.S. fleet in late July and the PRESIDENT EISENHOWER will be ushered out in mid-September. The PRESIDENT MONROE would flag-in sometime in October and the PRESIDENT KENNEDY would be removed from the fleet in November. Finally, the tentative schedule targets the arrival of the PRESIDENT JOHNSON in November with no word on the fate of the PRESIDENT CLEVELAND, the other vessel in the U.S.-flag APL fleet not mentioned in this article.

In all cases, the new ships are expected to assume the Maritime Security Program chits from the outgoing vessels. M.E.B.A., MM&P, SIU, SUP and MFOW mariners will continue to crew the replacement ships under the existing agreement with APL.

MARITIME ADMINISTRATOR ISSUES NEW YEAR'S MESSAGE TO U.S.-FLAG MARINERS

Maritime Administrator Rear Admiral Ann Phillips issued a New Year's message to American mariners crediting their perennial hard work in keeping MarAd operating smoothly. She noted:

“I am amazed by the unwavering dedication and tremendous work ethic displayed by the crews of our US Flag Fleet Vessels, especially those at sea today, far from friends and family, supporting America's Armed Forces and critical supply chains.

MarAd's mission to foster, promote, and develop the maritime industry to meet the nation's economic and security needs could not be met without you, mariners who are willing to take a career path that has you at sea for long periods during which “telework” is not an option like it is for so many others. I appreciate your hard work, the service you provide to our nation, and thank you for answering the call to be our crew members for critical missions. I hope you and your fellow mariners take pride in your many accomplishments. Know that our agency is focused on continuing to grow the fleet to create a stronger and safer career pathway for you.

I know this message may find you far from home, and I hope you'll find some time upon your return to recharge, reset, and reflect. In the meantime, however you choose to - and are able to - celebrate the new year, please keep safety at the forefront.

Lastly, I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to you all for your contributions. As we look forward to the new year, I am confident that the MARAD Team - and especially our US Mariners aboard US Flag ships serving our nation at sea - will continue to achieve new heights and overcome any challenges presented by the ever-evolving global picture. Wishing you and your families a Happy New Year filled with prosperity, good health, and continued success.”

THREATS IN RED SEA & GULF OF ADEN TAKING A TOLL ON MARINERS

Commercial seafarers are facing additional stress and mental health struggles as drone attacks and pirate threats continue to escalate in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden. Mariners are on the front lines of two of the world's danger spots as they pass through the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, with potential attacks coming by both air and sea.

Ship owners and managers should not underestimate the impact this situation can have on the mental health of seafarers according to Charles Watkins, Founder of Mental Health Support Solutions (MHSS). “The feeling of not knowing what could happen and the uncertainty of travelling into the unknown may lead to anxiety and exhaustion, even amongst the most seasoned mariners. “And the more seafarers hear about other ships being attacked, the more reluctant they will be to join a vessel that will be taking that route,” he warned.

Furthermore, if they are caught up in an attack, while seafarers may exhibit symptoms of trauma immediately, there is also the possibility that, having initially appeared to have dealt with their distress, there may be a delayed response that could show up months later.

“The emotions felt at the time of the ordeal such as the fear of death, extreme anxiety, helplessness, sadness, anger, a strong longing to escape the situation, and a sense of being out of control, can all lead to short- and long-term effects,” he said.

APPLY FOR UNION PLUS SCHOLARSHIPS

M.E.B.A. families have until January 31, 2024 to apply for college education assistance money through Union Plus. Union Plus is awarding \$200,000 in scholarships. 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 www.unionplus.org/scholarship for details. 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 Wednesday, January 31, 2024, at noon (EST). Applications arriving after the deadline will not be considered. The award date is May 31, 2024. During the first week of June 2024, 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 2024. Students may re-apply each year. Get the official application and all the details including eligibility criteria by visiting unionplus.org/scholarship Now in its 32nd year, the program has given over \$5.4 million in educational funding to more than 3,800 union members, spouses, and dependent children.

MEMBERSHIP ENCOURAGED TO ATTEND UPCOMING MEETINGS

Members and applicants (and retirees) are strongly urged to attend one of the fourteen January membership meetings taking place next week (Dec.8-12) at the Union halls. Membership meetings are a great way for members, applicants and retirees to stay involved, get informed, and deliver input to help advance the business of the Union. There is another full agenda that will benefit from healthy meeting attendance and participation.

Among other items, there is important and positive news about M.E.B.A Plans office modernizations and improvements. In addition, members will receive the latest updates on additional work brought into the Union as well as another new shoreside employer, ongoing contract negotiations and other topics of concern for our membership.

If you can’t attend in person, we encourage you to participate in the Wednesday Online Informational Headquarters meeting that occurs during regular meeting weeks. This format has allowed members serving aboard ship to take part in meeting week, and we encourage those with sufficient internet or

those in port to participate as their work may allow. Check the following schedule and see what works for you.

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

Monday, January 8 – **Boston@1200; Seattle (Fife)@1300.**

Tuesday, January 9 – **CMES@1430; Charleston@1400; Houston@1315; Oakland@1230.**

Wednesday, January 10 – **Jacksonville@1300; New Orleans@1315; Online HQ “Town Hall” Meeting@1300 (No Voting) – Register by emailing mebahq@mebaunion.org**

Thursday, January 11 – **L.A. (San Pedro)@1230; NY/NJ@1300; Norfolk@1300; Tampa@1300.**

Friday, January 12 – **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.***

The M.E.B.A. is the nation's oldest maritime labor union, established in 1875. M.E.B.A.'s expertise and demonstrated 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. 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 Visit us on Facebook, follow us on Twitter and check us out on Instagram.