

MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)

"On Watch in Peace and War since 1875"



M.E.B.A. TELEX TIMES

The Official Union Newsletter – "The Word to the Wise"
Number 1 – January 7, 2021



In this issue//M.E.B.A. Organizes New Shoreside Engineer Jobs with Eco-Alpha//Defense Bill with Maritime Provisions Becomes Law//Pro-U.S.-Flag "Sense of Congress" Statements//Maritime Partnership Hails Jones Act Provisions//Ports, Great Lakes Interests Pleased with Omnibus//Chao Resigns as Term Winds Down//Walsh to Be Nominated as Next Labor Secretary//Mariners Facing Threats Near Persian Gulf//Coast Guard Wants Mariner COVID-19 Input//Navy Looking to Recapitalize NOAA Fleet//

M.E.B.A. ORGANIZES NEW SHORESIDE ENGINEER JOBS WITH ECO-ALPHA

Following a successful card check organizing drive, the M.E.B.A. has reached a first contract and partnered with a forward-thinking facilities operation and maintenance company for shoreside jobs in the San Francisco Bay-area.

The Union signed a contract on New Year's Day with Sacramento, CA-based Eco-Alpha Environmental and Engineering Services, Inc. that will initially put nine members to work as stationary engineers at four California state buildings in San Francisco, Oakland, and Santa Rosa. Eco-Alpha is a growing, innovative company established in 2013 and is geared toward environmentally-friendly operation.

These are permanent positions paying industry standard wages for 40-hour workweeks (OT possible), with M.E.B.A. Pension, Medical and Training benefits, as well as MPB & 401k. The company is pleased with the member response to these positions and the excellent work being performed by our engineers on the job. The stationary engineer positions require an EPA Refrigerant Card. Those interested in future positions should contact M.E.B.A.'s Union hall in Oakland.

This new work is part of the ongoing efforts to pursue new initiatives and job opportunities for our highly-skilled membership both at sea and ashore.

DEFENSE BILL WITH MARITIME PROVISIONS BECOMES LAW AFTER VETO OVERRIDE

A \$740 billion defense bill with numerous maritime provisions has become law following the Congressional override of President Trump's veto. Trump vetoed the Fiscal Year 2021 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) after lawmakers refused to repeal a liability law for internet companies and left in language renaming military bases that honor Confederate leaders. The veto was overturned by the House of Representatives in a 322 to 87 vote, and by the Senate in an 81 to 13 vote.

Some of the provisions of interest to the industry include increased authorized funding for the Maritime Security Program to allow vessel operators to respond to the pandemic (these funds must be appropriated by a separate act of Congress), establishment of a 10-vessel Tanker Security Fleet, a non-partisan audit of federal agencies in compliance or non-compliance with cargo preference laws,

restrictions on the Jones Act waiver process to avoid exploitation by foreign-flag vessels, and establishment of a maritime emergency relief authority so that the Maritime Administration may provide financial assistance to support the Maritime Transportation System in the event of a national emergency or disaster, including the COVID-19 pandemic.

PRO-U.S.-FLAG “SENSE OF CONGRESS” STATEMENTS PASSED AS PART OF NDAA

Encased within the voluminous Defense bill that has now become law is an unmitigated Congressional statement of support for the Jones Act and the domestic maritime industry. Two “Sense of Congress” statements - non-binding resolutions that express the views of the Senate and House – are embedded in the new law and stand as a testament to the bipartisan support for U.S.-flag shipping’s vital role to this nation’s economy and national security.

Section 3522 (Sense of Congress Regarding Role of Domestic Maritime Industry in National Security) states:

“It is the sense of Congress that (1) United States coastwise trade laws promote a strong domestic trade maritime industry, which supports the national security and economic vitality of the United States and the efficient operation of the United States transportation system; and (2) a strong commercial maritime industry makes the United States more secure.”

Section 8403 (Sense of Congress Regarding the Maritime Industry of the United States) says:

“It is the sense of Congress that the maritime industry of the United States contributes to the Nation’s economic prosperity and national security.”

MARITIME PARTNERSHIP HAILS DEFENSE BILL’S PRO-JONES ACT PROVISIONS

The American Maritime Partnership, a coalition representing the domestic maritime industry that counts the M.E.B.A. and AMC as members among others, hailed the passing of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) calling it the most “consequential maritime legislation enacted in many years.”

In particular, they singled out a provision confirming that all American laws, including the Jones Act, apply to renewable energy development on America’s Outer Continental Shelf. They said that by eliminating uncertainty over this issue, Congress will help unleash robust investment and job creation in the American maritime industry tied to clean offshore energy development.

They noted that the NDAA also clarifies the terms and procedures that apply in the extremely rare circumstances under which an emergency administrative Jones Act waiver can be issued. In particular, a national defense waiver must be tied to a legitimate national defense need, non-defense waivers will be time-limited, and all waivers will now be subject to public reporting requirements by any foreign vessel using the waiver to operate in American domestic markets.

PORTS, GREAT LAKES INTERESTS LAUD IMPORTANT PROVISIONS IN RECENTLY-PASSED OMNIBUS

The President also recently signed the \$1.4 trillion Fiscal Year 2021 Omnibus spending bill which was attached to a \$908 billion COVID-19 economic relief package. A recent *Telex Times* discussed the spending bill’s inclusion of full appropriated funding for the Maritime Security Program.

The Lake Carriers Association (LCA), which represents 13 companies operating Great Lakes vessels including M.E.B.A.-contracted Interlake Steamship Company, pointed out that the appropriations bill also includes funding for a much-needed new Great Lakes icebreaker for the Coast Guard. They also note that lawmakers included significant funds for the Great Lakes Navigation System (GLNS), a deep-draft waterway connecting all five Great Lakes.

Both LCA and the American Association of Port Authorities (AAPA), which represents 140 seaports, was pleased that the Omnibus provided strong funding for the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA). WRDA includes critical Harbor Maintenance Tax (HMT) spending reforms long advocated by the ports along with the first-ever drawdowns from the \$9.3 billion balance in the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund (HMTF). Additional funding in WRDA for the Great Lakes will support critical navigation projects including maintenance of the MacArthur and Poe Locks, dredging of GLNS navigation channels, and repair of Great Lakes harbor jetties and breakwaters.

Although there were concerns that many of the COVID-19 impacts to seaports weren't sufficiently addressed with the funding, AAPA was pleased that the passed-NDAA "will go a long way to enhancing port infrastructure development (waterside and landside), providing investments in multimodal transportation, and ensuring timely inspection of goods moving through America's ports."

DOT SECRETARY RESIGNS TWO WEEKS BEFORE END OF TERM

Department of Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao announced her resignation from her Cabinet position, effective Monday, with two weeks left in the Trump administration. She referenced the turmoil at the U.S. Capitol yesterday as part of the reasoning for the move. "Our country experienced a traumatic and entirely avoidable event as supporters of the President stormed the Capitol building following a rally he addressed," she noted. "As I'm sure is the case with many of you, it has deeply troubled me in a way that I simply cannot set aside."

The M.E.B.A. and other maritime transportation organizations have had an excellent working relationship with Secretary Chao and express our great thanks for her service.

Incoming President Joe Biden announced recently that he intends to nominate former South Bend, Indiana Mayor Pete Buttigieg to be the next Transportation Secretary.

MARTY WALSH TO BE NOMINATED AS NEXT LABOR SECRETARY

President-elect Joe Biden has announced that 53-year old Boston Mayor Marty Walsh will be nominated as the next Secretary of Labor.

Walsh's nomination had been promoted by several labor unions as well as the AFL-CIO. The Mayor has a close relationship with the President-elect along with a strong union background. He joined the Laborers' Union, Local 223 as a young man, eventually becoming the head of the organization and also led the Boston Building and Construction Trades Council.

AFSCME President Lee Saunders said Walsh "is a card-carrying union member who has executive experience running a large city. There's no doubt he'd be a high profile and passionate fighter for worker's rights."

AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka said Mayor Walsh will be “an exceptional labor secretary.” He “has always been a fighter who understands the power of working people standing together for a better life.”

MARINERS FACING NEW THREATS IN PERSIAN GULF/STRAITS OF HORMUZ

The Maritime Administration (MarAd) has issued a new maritime alert that warns of threats to commercial shipping in the Persian Gulf stemming from recent events. On New Year’s Eve, a limpet mine that was surreptitiously placed on the hull of a Liberian-flagged tanker in the Persian Gulf off Iraq was discovered and subsequently dismantled. On January 4, Iranian Revolutionary Guards seized a South Korean-flagged tanker in the Strait of Hormuz claiming that it was “polluting the Persian Gulf with chemicals.”

MarAd emphasized that caution must be exercised by mariners when transiting the area and asked those operating vessels to review U.S. Maritime Advisory 2020-011 (Persian Gulf, Strait of Hormuz, Gulf of Oman, Arabian Sea, Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, and Indian Ocean-Threats to Commercial Vessels by Iran and its Proxies). Maritime industry questions regarding the alert should be directed to GMCC@uscg.mil.

COAST GUARD LOOKING FOR MARINER COVID-19 INPUT, RECOMMENDATIONS IN UPCOMING ONLINE LISTENING SESSION

Mariners are invited to take part in a Coast Guard listening session to hear input and recommendations from the various segments of the maritime industry regarding the impact of COVID-19 on operations and the workforce. The U.S. Committee on the Marine Transportation System (CMTS) COVID-19 Working Group will have a WebEx industry Listening Session on Wednesday, January 13 from 1400-1530 EST. Mariners and others are urged to articulate current unresolved concerns and any recommendations for further action by the working group to address ongoing industry challenges.

To access the Listening Session at the appointed hour, join <https://usdot.webex.com/join/nuns.jain> Telcon: 404-443-2170; Access Code: 60061206# Those who wish to speak at the session are asked to email C19WG@cmts.gov by Monday, January 11.

NAVY LOOKING TO RECAPITALIZE NOAA FLEET

NOAA’s effort to recapitalize its aging fleet of research ships took a step forward this week as the Navy awarded a Houma, Louisiana shipyard with a contract to begin the design and construction of two new oceanographic ships. M.E.B.A. represents the engine officers aboard the vessels in the NOAA fleet. Jack Menendez is M.E.B.A. Branch Agent in Norfolk who also serves as the Government Fleet Representative.

Thoma-Sea Marine Constructors LLC will construct both vessels. The first is set to be named OCEANOGRAPHER and will be homeported in Honolulu. The second will be named DISCOVERER and has not been assigned a homeport yet, at this early date. The vessels are targeted for completion by June 2024.

Designed as single-hull ships, the vessels will incorporate the latest technologies, including high-efficiency, environmentally friendly EPA Tier IV diesel engines, emissions controls for stack gases, new information technology tools for monitoring shipboard systems, and underwater scientific research and survey equipment. The ships will be equipped to launch work boats, perform maintenance on buoys and moorings, deploy scientific instruments to collect weather and water

column data, and conduct seafloor mapping surveys. Each vessel will operate with a crew of 20 and will accommodate up to 28 scientists.

ONLINE FEBRUARY MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS – (All times are local)

(Registration period to sign up for online meetings runs between January 28 - February 4)

Monday, February 8 – Boston@1200; Seattle (Fife)@1300;

Tuesday, February 9 – CMES@1430 (*CMES Meeting will likely be conducted in-person*);
Charleston@1400; Houston@1315; Oakland@1230;

Wednesday, February 10 – Jacksonville@1300; New Orleans@1315;

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

Tuesday, February 16 – Honolulu@1100.

-----FINISHED WITH ENGINES-----



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. 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. Visit us on Facebook, follow us on Twitter and check us out on Instagram.