

MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)

"On Watch in Peace and War since 1875"



M.E.B.A. TELEX TIMES

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TALKS WITH LIBERTY MARITIME

The Union met with Liberty Maritime on Tuesday at M.E.B.A. Headquarters for continued discussions toward an agreement for four Pure Car/Truck Carriers (PC/TCs. Our contract with the company covers the LIBERTY PRIDE, LIBERTY PROMISE, LIBERTY PASSION and LIBERTY PEACE.

Atlantic Coast V.P. Jason Callahan leads negotiations for the Union and was joined on Tuesday by M.E.B.A. President Marshall Ainley, Secretary-Treasurer Bill Van Loo, Contracts Rep. Mark Gallagher and M.E.B.A. in-house counsel Nils Djusberg.

The parties agreed to a tentative meeting on August 6th in New York City.

Rank and file input for negotiations is welcomed, and experienced members are urged to participate in the talks. If you are interested, please contact M.E.B.A. Atlantic Coast V.P. Jason Callahan at jcallahan@mebaunion.org.

FLOOR VOTE FOR HOUSE DEFENSE BILL

The Fiscal Year 2020 National Defense Authorization Act, a \$733 billion package containing a number of important maritime-related provisions, is expected to receive a Floor vote tomorrow (Friday July 12). Among many other provisions, the comprehensive defense bill contains language extending the life of the Maritime Security Program (MSP) for an additional 10 years through 2035. In addition, the legislation would authorize a Tanker Security Fleet that would provide a per-vessel stipend by the Department of Defense to utilize 10 U.S.-flagged commercial petroleum product tankers. In addition, the House bill also contains a provision establishing a two vessel U.S.-flag cable security fleet that would "provide installation, maintenance, and repair of submarine cables and related equipment."

Previously approved Senate legislation also extends the MSP for another 10 years similar to the House defense bill while also addressing a budget anomaly in the current MSP. While it does not include language establishing a product tanker or cable fleet, these provisions, among others, will need to be addressed by conferees when the House and Senate sit down to reconcile their final versions prior to a final vote in both legislative chambers and the President's signature.

HELP GET WWII MARINER GOLD MEDAL BILL ACROSS THE FINISH LINE!

Mariners and veteran interests believe a bill honoring World War II merchant mariners has its best-ever chance for passage into law after years of disappointment. H.R. 550, a bill sponsored by Rep. John Garamendi (D-CA) and Rep. Don Young (R-AK) to authorize a Congressional Gold Medal honoring World War II merchant mariners, recently collected over 290 co-sponsors which allows it to advance to the House Floor for a vote. The vote has yet to be scheduled but sources believe it will occur sometime before the end of the 116th Congress, perhaps late this summer. A companion Senate bill (S. 133), introduced by Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), is still in the process of gathering co-sponsors and would benefit from increased attention and support. Because the bill is non-controversial, there is an opportunity that a House-passed H.R. 550 could be taken up by the Senate and signed into law. However, nothing should be taken for granted and our readers are asked to continue efforts to highlight the importance of honoring our WWII merchant mariners.

The Merchant Marine played a heroic and vital role in World War II and the feats and accomplishments of the “Fourth Arm of Defense” are deserving of broader public recognition. The bills’ chances for passage can increase with your assistance. You can help drum up support by using this link from the Navy League that will let you send a ready-made letter to your Members of Congress urging support for the bills. Visit www.votervoice.net/NavyLeague/Campaigns/59995/Respond and help us get this over the finish line!

COAST GUARD WARNS ABOUT ONBOARD CYBER VULNERABILITIES

The Coast Guard is again advising mariners to keep their guard up against cyber-attacks aimed at maritime interests. They cited a crippling incident earlier this year where predators were able to compromise a vessel’s network putting essential control systems at risk.

Coast Guard said, “with engines that are controlled by mouse clicks and growing reliance on electronic charting and navigation systems, protecting these systems with proper cybersecurity measures is as essential as controlling physical access to the ship or performing routine maintenance on traditional machinery.” They issued a series of advisory bullet points urging the maritime community to ensure their systems adapt to new technologies and ask all parties to implement “cyber hygiene measures.”

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) provides several free resources to help maritime interests assess the state of their networks and identify cyber vulnerabilities. One such resource is National Cybersecurity and Communications Integration Center’s (NCCIC) Hunt and Incident Response Team (HIRT). Any company can request HIRT services by visiting their website <https://www.us-cert.gov> or by calling the NCCIC 24x7 watch floor at (888) 282-0870.

BRITISH TANKER HARASSED BY IRANIAN GUNBOATS

Britain’s Ministry of Defense announced that at least three armed Iranian boats were thwarted in an attempt to “intercept” a British oil tanker this week as tension in the Persian Gulf region spills over. The Royal Navy warship HMS MONTROSE had been shadowing the BRITISH HERITAGE near the Strait of Hormuz when it spotted the Iranian Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) boats confronting the tanker near the island of Abu Musa. The frigate’s intervention managed to de-escalate the incident and allowed the tanker, loaded up with BP oil, to continue through the Strait and into the

Gulf of Oman. Iran denied the incident ever happened though Royal Navy sources note the brief stand-off was captured on video.

The incident occurred on the same day Iran's President threatened consequences against the UK for the seizure of an Iranian-backed tanker last week. In that incident, British Royal Marines seized the Singaporean-owned, Panamanian-flagged vessel laden with Iranian oil. Iran was accused of violating sanctions by clandestinely transporting oil to Syria. Iran demanded the return of the oil tanker and denied the allegations.

Mariners in the Strait of Hormuz area have been on high alert in recent months as six commercial vessels were attacked in May and early June. The U.S. and Iran have exchanged accusations and threats and Iran shot down a U.S. drone.

GULF BRACING AS STORM MOVES IN

M.E.B.A.'s Union hall in New Orleans took some flooding damage on Wednesday and the Gulf Coast is bracing as Tropical Storm Barry moves into the area and was expected to strengthen. Safety issues prompted the cancellation of the hall's monthly membership meeting on Wednesday.

Heavy rains saturated the New Orleans area and began pushing the levees to their limits. Everything was wet on Wednesday after eight inches of rain collected in the Big Easy over two hours and water seeped into the hall necessitating damage control and further preventative measures today. Prognosticators fear conditions will begin to break down early tomorrow heralding the touchdown of a possible Hurricane Barry that could occur as soon as Friday night. The storm is currently on a path toward central Louisiana. M.E.B.A. halls in Houston and Tampa are also watching the weather and will take appropriate action as necessary. Members with business at Gulf Coast halls on Friday should call ahead before making a personal appearance.

WSF RETIRES HALF CENTURY OLD SUPERFERRY HYAK

Washington State Ferry mariners were misty-eyed recently as the super-class ferry HYAK was decommissioned following a final Seattle-to-Bremerton run marking 51 great years. The vessel, unveiled in 1967 after its construction at San Diego's National Steel and Shipbuilding Company, will be put up for sale.

The decommissioning leaves the WSF fleet at 22 vessels. The state says 12 more boats will be retired in the next 20 years necessitating continued fleet renewal efforts to maintain services and stave off disruptions. "Hyak" is Chinook-speak for "speedy."

The fate of the HYAK was sealed after receiving no love in the State's transportation 2019-21 budget. "It's like an old car," said WSF spokesperson Ian Sterling. "At some point, it becomes cheaper to get a new one."

WSF noted that over the last half-century, HYAK sailed on almost every WSF route, primarily serving Seattle/Bremerton in recent years. It served the Edmonds/Kingston route for more than a decade, sailed often in the San Juan Islands and even served as a relief vessel for the busy Seattle/Bainbridge Island route many years ago.

NEW MAINE MARITIME PROFESSIONAL MARINER FACILITY

Maine Maritime Academy has completed the purchase of a four-acre parcel of land in Bucksport, ME where a new Center for Professional Mariner Development (CPMD) will be created. The annex facility will provide specialized courses for professional mariners, academy-enrolled students, and workforce development. For professional mariners, the Center will meet the demand for courses that enable mariners to receive certification and credentialing to meet maritime regulatory and industry-sector demands.

The new training center will house classrooms, offices, training labs, simulator spaces, and conference rooms as well as a state-of-the-art, multi-purpose firefighting training facility. It is expected to be operational in the spring of 2020.

GREAT LAKES WATER LEVELS AT RECORD HIGHS

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has announced that water levels on the Great Lakes are at alarming highs, covering Lake Superior, Lake St. Clair, Lake Erie and Lake Ontario. June's water levels were the highest lake water levels for any month since 1918.

June was the third consecutive month with above average precipitation across the Great Lake basin as a whole. This persistently wet weather has also allowed stream flows into the Great Lakes to remain well above average for this time of year.

The Army Corps said that the Great Lakes region will continue to see the threat of coastal flooding and shoreline erosion especially during storms. Water levels and flow rates in the connecting channels of the Great Lakes are also high and may, depending on winds and other atmospheric conditions, lead to localized flooding.

REGULAR MONTHLY MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS

Monday, August 5 – **Boston@1200; Seattle (Fife)@1300;**

Tuesday, August 6 – **CMES@1430; Charleston@1400; Houston@1315; Oakland@1230;**

Wednesday, August 7 – **Jacksonville@1300; New Orleans@1315;**

Thursday, August 8 – **L.A. (San Pedro)@1230; NY/NJ@1300; Norfolk@1300; Tampa@1300;**

Friday, August 9 – **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; mehq@mebaunion.org. Visit us on Facebook. For publication and related inquiries 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.