

# 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//Appeals Court Reverses Decision Limiting Anti-Union Executive Orders//Acting Labor Secretary has Worked against Unions//House Votes to Repeal Cadillac Tax//Officials Looking to Aid Safe Shipping in Middle East//T&I Committee Members Introduce Bill to Ward Off Aviation FOCs//CMES has More Room in Gas Turbine Class//Support the Merchant Marine Memorial!//NOLA Hall is Drying Out//

### **TRUMP EXECUTIVE ORDERS TARGETING UNIONS ARE BACK IN PLAY**

The thrust of three anti-labor Executive Orders will be allowed to take effect after a U.S. Court of Appeals reversed a federal district court opinion limiting the Orders. Fifteen combined unions, including the M.E.B.A., received a favorable decision last August from the district court which said that the three Trump-issued E.O.s violated statutory law. In May 2018, the Trump administration issued the Orders to diminish workplace rights of federal employees. One Order watered down grievance procedures and eased the way for agencies to fire workers in lieu of disciplinary measures. Another targeted collective bargaining agreements to give the Government the upper hand against unions negotiating contracts. A third Order curtailed "official time" which allows labor unions to represent union and non-union bargaining unit members in disciplinary actions and other matters.

The Court of Appeals, in its decision issued on Tuesday, said the federal district court lacked jurisdiction and the Executive Orders can proceed without limitation.

But the coalition of unions, including the M.E.B.A., will not take the news sitting down and have vowed to fight. Two of the government unions issued statements criticizing the appeals court decision. "This fight is not over," said National Treasury Employees Union (NTEU) President Tony Reardon. "Not only will NTEU pursue every legal avenue to block these destructive executive fiats, but we will build on the progress we have made alerting Congress and the public about how the administration continues to attack and disrespect its own workforce."

The American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE), the largest union representing federal government workers, said they will fight the decision, "using every legal tool available to us...The union-busting framework laid out in the executive orders and the actions already taken at the bargaining table so far demonstrate clearly that there must be a check on the president's power to destroy federal employees' union rights."

### **ACTING LABOR SECRETARY HAS ANTI-LABOR TRACK RECORD; PERMANENT NOMINATION MAY BE FORTHCOMING**

It appears the Trump administration will take an even harder line against working families after it was announced that U.S. Deputy Secretary of Labor Patrick Pizzella will assume the top job at DOL in an acting capacity after the resignation of Alexander Acosta. Acosta succumbed to calls for his ouster

after the discovery of his role in a lenient 2008 plea deal for Jeffery Epstein who is currently accused of sex trafficking.

Insiders note that Acosta was never a White House favorite, stemming from his alleged intransigence in implementing even more heavy-handed anti-worker regulations. That is likely to change under the leadership of Pizzella who has been strongly praised by corporate interests for his long track record of working to weaken labor laws while favoring business interests. Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) said that Pizzella's "checkered past on these issues —including lobbying with convicted felon Jack Abramoff on behalf of sweatshops and pushing anti-worker policies as a member of the Federal Labor Relations Authority — make him unfit to lead the Department of Labor."

"If the president is serious about helping working people, selecting Patrick Pizzella wouldn't be the way to demonstrate that," American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten said. "My dealings with Patrick have been limited, but his dubious track record...doesn't bode well."

At press time, news reports emerged that President Trump is leaning toward nominating Eugene Scalia to be the permanent replacement as DOL Secretary, subject to Senate confirmation. If true, the news remains grim for working families since Scalia, son of a former Supreme Court Justice, is a management-side attorney who has a history of fighting against worker rights and protections.

### **HOUSE VOTES TO REPEAL "CADILLAC TAX"**

On a rare issue of agreement, House Democrats and Republicans joined forces on Wednesday to vote for a repeal of the so-called "Cadillac tax," a widely unpopular provision of the beleaguered Affordable Care Act. The 40% excise tax on certain employer-sponsored health insurance plans is set to be triggered in 2022 and was intended to help reduce health care and increases in out-of-pocket expenses so workers would use fewer medical services. The House vote of 419-6 in favor of the repeal has been a major priority for the AFL-CIO and its affiliated unions who view the tax as a penalty for members who receive health care benefits regularly negotiated with their employer. However, it is unclear whether the Senate will take up the legislation, though a similar bill in the Senate has 40 co-sponsors attached to it.

Rep. Joe Courtney (D-CT), who visited M.E.B.A. Headquarters this morning to discuss maritime matters, introduced the repeal legislation along with Rep. Mike Kelly (R-PA).

"If the 40% excise tax goes into effect, we know this affordability crisis will dramatically worsen," Rep. Courtney said. "Actuarial experts have repeatedly warned that this tax will disproportionately and unfairly impact older workers, women, and working families in expensive geographic areas."

"Working families have waited too long for repeal of the 40% health benefits tax," said AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka. "It's a shame that health care remains out of reach for millions across the country because they can't afford to see their doctor. It's time to end this tax that drives up deductibles and co-pays that empty workers' wallets."

### **OFFICIALS WORKING ON SHIPPING SAFETY IN MIDDLE EAST HOTSPOTS**

The U.S. State and Defense Departments are pushing forward with an initiative aimed at protecting vessel traffic in overseas hotspots where a series of recent high-profile incidents have made headlines. The Departments plan to brief members of the "Washington diplomatic corps" about the Maritime

Security Initiative, which aims to safeguard freedom of navigation and maritime security in the Middle East.

Officials previously indicated that stepped-up measures could include increasing equipped surveillance technology on commercial vessels to better monitor situations and help hold nefarious entities accountable.

The Strait of Hormuz has been of particular worry recently following six attacks on commercial ships in May and June. The U.S. believes Iran was responsible for those incidents. The relationship between the U.S. and Iran has been in a pronounced down-spiral after President Trump pulled out of a 2015 nuclear agreement aimed at keeping Iran at bay. Those countries have lobbed threats and accusations at each other since then and Iran shot down a U.S. drone. Earlier today in the Strait, the U.S. Navy ship USS BOXER immobilized an Iranian drone that was flying too close to the ship. Last week Great Britain seized an Iranian-backed tanker they say was attempting to circumvent sanctions and secretly delivering oil to Syria. Soon after, a British tanker was briefly impeded by armed Iranian boats before the presence of a British warship helped de-escalate the situation. Today, Iran finally took credit for seizing an oil tanker transiting the Strait of Hormuz earlier this week after initially claiming they were merely lending needed assistance to the tanker, which was originally identified as United Arab Emirates-based. Iran is claiming that the vessel was involved in fuel smuggling. Reports indicate there are 12 crewmembers aboard.

### **T&I COMMITTEE PRINCIPALS PUSH BILL TO STAVE OFF AIRLINE FOCs**

Top Members of Congress on the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee are fronting legislation aimed at preventing flag of convenience airlines from getting a foothold in the U.S. market for transatlantic flights.

Committee Chairman Peter DeFazio (D-OR) introduced bipartisan legislation to prohibit the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) from issuing a foreign air carrier permit for U.S. operations to “flag of convenience” (FOC) airlines. An airline operating under a FOC registers in a country other than its own to avoid safety regulations and undermine labor standards. The maritime industry has been plagued by FOCs which pave the way for substandard shipping while lowering wages and conditions of its workers. The U.S. aviation industry, including M.E.B.A. affiliate PASS (Professional Aviation Safety Specialists) is onboard with the DeFazio effort that the Congressman has made a priority for his Committee.

Recently, Norwegian Air International received approval to operate as an Irish airline without offering any services from Ireland. NAI began using an employment contract with a Singapore agency to field pilots on their planes that are based in Thailand. Wages and working conditions governing those pilots are substandard. Rep. DeFazio said DOT’s decision in that case will encourage future opportunistic airlines to continue this “race to the bottom” in international civil aviation, threatening U.S. carriers’ ability to compete in critical international markets. The bi-partisan “Fair and Open Skies Act” has been tagged as H.R. 3632.

### **SUPPORT THE M.E.B.A. MARINER MEMORIAL!**

The M.E.B.A. Merchant Marine Memorial Foundation (4MF) continues to accept orders for memorial bricks and plaques that will further beautify the Park at our School in Easton, MD that pays tribute to mariners past and present. Memorial bricks can be engraved with names of loved ones and are part of the retreat at the Memorial Park. The park is shaped like a 600-foot merchant vessel complete with 5-

ton anchors, a ship's bell, bow section with plaques memorializing mariners of the past and a stern section with a six-bladed, 22-foot diameter bronze propeller.

You might also be interested in purchasing a memorial bow plaque in honor of a departed loved one. Start up a collection and pay tribute to a shipmate, instructor or friend who deserves a place in the park. Anyone wishing to purchase a brick or bow plaque must complete and return a donation form and monies. Please continue to help the cause - donations are greatly needed for the maintenance of the park!

For more information and to obtain the form please visit the School's website at [www.mebaschool.org](http://www.mebaschool.org) and click on the Memorial link on the far right side of the home page. You can email [memorial@mebaschool.org](mailto:memorial@mebaschool.org) to get any related questions answered.

### **M.E.B.A. NOLA HALL IS DRYING OUT**

M.E.B.A.'s Union hall in New Orleans was closed earlier this week while Representative/Dispatcher Dan Gifford makes sure our space on Carondelet Street is safe for members, applicants and staffers. The hall took water damage in the lead-up to the touchdown of Hurricane Barry last week. Heavy rain and flooding permeated the hall last Wednesday and measures are being taken to address the saturation and ensure air quality. In addition, the Union hall's monthly membership meeting was canceled last week as the weather moved in.

Dan plans to reopen the hall tomorrow, Friday July 19, though work to repair the damage continues. Those with M.E.B.A. business in the Big Easy may want to call ahead in case the situation changes. Voice mail messages left on the main number - (504) 523-1884 - are being regularly checked and will be followed up.

### **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; [mehaq@mebaunion.org](mailto:mehaq@mebaunion.org). Visit us on Facebook. For publication and related inquiries 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.*