

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 27 – July 2, 2020



In this issue//M.E.B.A. Endorses Joe Biden for President//Updated COVID-19 Guidelines at M.E.B.A. Halls & Offices//Positive Cases on MLL Ship, Company Successfully Executes Protocols//Navigating Crew Rotation Challenges//CMES Reopens, Pares Down Schedule, Implements New Policies//Establishment of Tanker Security Fleet in House Bill//Update Your Info with HQ//Hall Closures for Independence Day, Bloody Thursday//

M.E.B.A. ENDORSES JOE BIDEN FOR PRESIDENT

In a joint letter with the Masters, Mates and Pilots (MM&P), the M.E.B.A. announced its endorsement of former Vice President Joe Biden in the upcoming 2020 presidential election.

With unprecedented attacks on organized labor, the Trump Administration has taken numerous actions to undermine the rights of workers to form a union and weaken the ability to collectively bargain in the workplace. One example is the recent appointment of anti-worker Supreme Court justices, including one who voted for the landmark Janus decision against public sector workers that prohibits labor unions from collecting dues from non-members even though they still enjoy union protections.

Such actions have long-lasting implications on the M.E.B.A. which is proud to represent the hardworking men and women of the Washington State Ferries, the Alaska Marine Highway System, City and Borough of Juneau (CBJ), the Staten Island Ferries, as well as the members of other smaller bargaining units and affiliates affected by the Janus decision. Furthermore, several Department of Labor government appointments of union-busting lawyers have paved the road toward the exploitation of our nation's labor laws at the hands of our private employers, who are rewarded for negotiating in bad faith, and continue to do so without any accountability.

The M.E.B.A. is proud to work on a daily basis in a bipartisan manner with members of Congress from both political parties and continues to work productively with members of the Trump Administration. Unfortunately, the war against working families waged by the current President continues to harm maritime labor's mission to serve the nation's economy and national security.

Vice President Joe Biden is not only a lifetime advocate for union rights, but also a staunch supporter of American merchant mariners through his support of the Jones Act, Maritime Security Program and Cargo Preference statutes reflected in numerous votes for our industry during his time in the U.S. Senate. In a recent letter addressed to the M.E.B.A., Vice President Biden stated: "As President, I will support full funding of the MSP's existing operating agreements, but I will go further: I will propose that Congress authorize and appropriate funds to increase the number of ships in the MSP fleet. We must have a modern fleet to help us address modern threats in several regions of the world."

The M.E.B.A.'s decision to endorse in this race reflects an overwhelming demand for experienced and stable leadership by an individual who knows that our economy and national security must have a strong U.S.-flag shipping presence. Such leadership requires an understanding that the important statutes we value and labor rights won't be bargained away at moment's notice to the benefit of one's self-interest. With an ongoing global pandemic that has caused much uncertainty and instability to our economic and public health, due in part to a lack of leadership by the current administration, our country requires a leader who is ready to meet the needs of working families and the U.S. Merchant Marine.

UPDATED COVID-19 GUIDELINES AT M.E.B.A. HALLS & OFFICES

M.E.B.A. has further updated and codified its COVID-19 policies at M.E.B.A. Union halls and offices in the interests of membership health and safety. The policy, issued in an All Ports Bulletin dated June 29, encapsulates and further updates an earlier APB issued on April 1. The newly released APB spells out procedures to adhere to when visiting the hall, including temporary procedures in place to allow members to clear remotely. A facial covering at the hall is mandatory and masks are available at each of our halls and offices, if needed. Social distancing rules are in effect and members feeling unwell or experiencing any symptom are urged to stay away. The APB has been posted on the M.E.B.A. website in the "Documents & Member Notices" section under "M.E.B.A. HQ & Union Hall Operational Notices."

POSITIVE CASES ON MLL SHIP, COMPANY SUCCESSFULLY EXECUTES PROTOCOLS

Ship manager Maersk Line, Ltd. successfully executed COVID-19 protocols onboard the MAERSK IDAHO after eleven crewmembers tested positive for the Coronavirus. An initial crewmember experienced flu-like symptoms as the vessel returned from an overseas run to Newark, NJ on June 19th. The crewmember was hospitalized and tested positive for COVID-19. The rest of the crew was tested and 10 additional cases were discovered, though each was asymptomatic and surprised to learn of their diagnosis. Those crewmembers disembarked in Norfolk, VA and the company arranged a quarantine location for them while the vessel was methodically cleaned and disinfected to make way for the next crew. The initial crewmember who tested positive is returning to health and was discharged from the hospital a week later. The new crew boarded the vessel after the "all clear" and the ship was able to return to service on June 28th.

The company's implementation of its protocols for such a scenario went smoothly and MLL worked closely with the unions as well as port, state, Coast Guard and health authorities, among others.

MLL issued thanks to the unions and everyone who recognizes the safety and health of the crew is the #1 priority - while understanding the importance of keeping our transportation network moving. MLL noted, "It is said that in difficult times people are often at their best and the way the MAERSK IDAHO crew has been responding ...is a great credit to themselves, their unions and the resourcefulness of the U.S. Merchant Marine."

NAVIGATING CREW ROTATION CHALLENGES

Our contracted companies continue to make every effort to effect crew rotations overseas for their shuttle service vessels. APL Maritime is making strides to clear hurdles to allow a new crew to join the APL GULF EXPRESS by the end of the week. Both departing crew and on-signers were subject to quarantine and multiple testings, among other precautions.

Maersk Line, Ltd. informed us that the SAFMARINE NGAMI was able to perform a crew change in Bahrain on Sunday. Crew changes for the MAERSK SENTOSA and MAERSK KINLOSS have been made more challenging by strict regulations in place in Sri Lanka, Pakistan, India and Oman where rotations remain impossible. The company is working with U.S. Government agencies for a solution, but right now, it looks like those vessels may have to wait until the second week in July when Dubai is reportedly set to loosen regulations allowing the SENTOSA and KINLOSS to divert there for crew changes.

The company also reports that a Maersk subsidiary is putting together a crew relief flight to Diego Garcia in which several companies will participate allowing them to bring in fresh crews for their vessels. Those companies include Patriot Contract Services, Crowley, and the Military Sealift Command, among several others.

MLL said it was helpful for M.E.B.A. to stress that any mariner who chooses to go ashore should go out of their way to be overly cautious, and once back onboard, treat themselves (and others) as if they have been exposed to the virus. “That means social distancing, wearing PPE including mask, avoiding common spaces including the mess-room for 5 days - by which time symptoms should present themselves. While we realize this infringes on some individual liberties, these precautions are sensible and fair to those who did not risk exposure but who may be especially vulnerable.”

CMES REOPENS, PARES DOWN SCHEDULE, IMPLEMENTS POLICIES

The Calhoun M.E.B.A. Engineering School will reopen its doors to students later this month after a pandemic-related hiatus that began in mid-March. They have revised and re-released the 2020 course schedule which is available at the Union halls and on the School’s website (www.mebaschool.org), where the notice and application form can also be obtained. You can also call the CMES Admissions Desk at (410) 822-9600.

A number of policy changes have been implemented to better protect students during the ongoing pandemic. Course registrations will only be accepted one month at a time, for now. At present, no guests or family members are permitted to accompany the student, as a further precaution. If the School posts any additional conditions and instructions, they will be available on the website.

ESTABLISHMENT OF TANKER SECURITY FLEET INCLUDED IN HOUSE BILL

A provision in a recently introduced Senate bill creating a Tanker Security Fleet has been matched by a comparable version in the House.

In early June, Senator Roger Wicker (R-MS), Chairman of the Senate Commerce Committee, introduced a bill (S. 3930) that, among other things, would establish a Tanker Security Fleet which would operate similarly to the Maritime Security Program. The 10-ship commercial petroleum product tanker fleet would help address the Department of Defense's refueling needs and reduce our military's reliance on foreign-flag vessels.

Last week, the House Armed Services Committee introduced a nearly identical provision in its annual defense bill known as the National Defense Authorization Act of Fiscal Year 2021 that would do the same. The M.E.B.A. continues working with Members of Congress to drive in the importance of a strong U.S. flag commercial fleet and we are advocating for the passage of this important provision, which has strong bipartisan support.

UPDATE YOUR INFO WITH HQ

Be sure to keep the Union updated with your current contact information including mailing address. This can be done using the address change form available on the M.E.B.A. website found at www.mebaunion.org under the “Members” tab or in the “Documents & Member Notices” section.

Alternatively, you can send your updated information to Renee Bowman at HQ by mail, fax at (202) 638-5369, or e-mail at membership@mebaunion.org Since the M.E.B.A. Plans office in Baltimore and Headquarters databases are NOT linked, you must also forward a signed change of address form to the Plans Office if you wish to update your information with them.

HALLS CLOSED TOMORROW FOR INDEPENDENCE DAY; WEST COAST CLOSED ON MONDAY FOR BLOODY THURSDAY

M.E.B.A. halls and offices will be closed tomorrow (Friday, July 3) in observance of Saturday’s Independence Day. West Coast halls will continue to be shuttered on Monday, July 6th in observance of “Bloody Thursday.”

Bloody Thursday commemorates the 1934 longshoremen labor action led by Harry Bridges that culminated in street fighting and clashes with police. Hundreds were injured and several were killed in the riots that came to a head on July 5, 1934. Following a general strike and federal intervention, the longshoremen won a coast-wide contract, union hiring halls, and various improvements to wages and conditions.

As a note, because of the West Coast holiday, the Seattle online membership meeting that would have taken place on Monday, has been moved to Tuesday, July 7th at the regular time.

JULY (ONLINE) MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS – (*All times are local*)

Monday, July 6 – Boston@1200;

Tuesday, July 7 – CMES@1430; Charleston@1400; Houston@1315; Oakland@1230; **Seattle (Fife)@1300;**

Wednesday, July 8 – Jacksonville@1300; New Orleans@1315;

Thursday, July 9 – L.A. (San Pedro)@1230; NY/NJ@1300; Norfolk@1300; Tampa@1300;

Friday, July 10 – 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.