

# MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)

*"On Watch in Peace and War since 1875"*



## M.E.B.A. TELEX TIMES

*The Official Union Newsletter*

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### **GLEASON DAY TOMORROW - EAST COAST HALLS CLOSED**

All M.E.B.A. East Coast halls and offices (except Headquarters) will be closed tomorrow, March 16th in observance of Teddy Gleason Day. Thomas "Teddy" Gleason was the President of the International Longshoremen's Association from 1963 to 1987. He died in 1992 at the age of 92. St. Patty's Day was selected as the day to honor the life and legacy of Gleason, one of our greatest trade unionists. Since St. Patty's falls on a weekend, Gleason Day will be observed tomorrow.

### **MARAD SIMULATED SHIP BREAKOUT TUESDAY; MEMBER PARTICIPATION IS CRUCIAL**

Qualified members, applicants and retirees are being summoned for a massive simulated vessel breakout that begins on Tuesday, March 20<sup>th</sup> to test whether they are ready for action if a real ship and mariner mobilization is required. The nine-day tabletop activation of the MarAd Ready Reserve Force fleet and Military Sealift Command Surge sealift vessels is an annual Command Post Exercise conducted at the direction of the U.S. Transportation Command.

This is a paper exercise and members participating in the exercise won't actually report to the vessels but MarAd will be contacting many by email later on to verify their readiness to crew the ships. *Once the paper activation starts, agreeing to a virtual ship assignment will not preclude a mariner from subsequently taking a real-world shipping job.*

M.E.B.A. Deck and Engine officers in all positions will be needed for this exercise. Properly credentialed officers who are not currently working a job are needed to participate in this exercise that will take very little time.

**It is important to check in with your hall, let them know you're available and make sure they have your cell number or best contact information.** Member participation in this exercise should take no longer than 5 minutes on the phone. Expect a quick call from an M.E.B.A. official or Dispatcher sometime after the exercise begins on Tuesday. Deck officers are especially encouraged to call ahead to a hall and offer to add their names to the list.

The Command Post Exercise will document mariners assigned by name and Mariner Reference Number in order to verify Merchant Mariner Credentials (MMCs) and their applicable licensing

endorsements. **Make sure you have your Mariner Reference Number (from top right of MMC photo page)** available when speaking with the M.E.B.A. official or Dispatcher.

M.E.B.A. members have been through this many times before and have always come through – in virtual breakouts and for the real thing. Please help us ensure that the mariner workforce holds up its end in Breakout 2018.

### **M.E.B.A. CONTINUES INFORMATIONAL PICKETING AGAINST LIBERTY**

Members, applicants and retirees continue informational picketing against Liberty Maritime Corp. as the LIBERTY PEACE is making a series of U.S. port stops. M.E.B.A. had a presence in Beaumont, Texas, Brunswick, GA and Jacksonville, FL within the last week at the associated terminals.

The vessel is scheduled to visit Charleston, SC and members will be at the dock tomorrow broadcasting Liberty's violation. If you can join the picketing in Charleston on Friday, please contact Tampa Branch Agent Adam Smith at (813) 215-1720 or [asmith@mebaunion.org](mailto:asmith@mebaunion.org).

Liberty crewed up the recently-acquired U.S.-flag vessel in late August 2017 with labor other than the M.E.B.A. These informational pickets are highlighting Liberty's clear breach of the existing Collective Bargaining Agreement which has provided for M.E.B.A. members onboard Liberty vessels for the last 30 years.

The PEACE is tentatively set to visit Philadelphia, Wilmington, DE and Boston following the Charleston stop. Those who might be able to join informational picketing at those port visits are urged to contact Atlantic Coast V.P. Jason Callahan at (201) 433-7700 or [jcallahan@mebaunion.org](mailto:jcallahan@mebaunion.org).

### **SUBCOMMITTEE GRUMBLES OVER FUNDING FOR GOVERNMENT MARITIME AGENCIES**

On Wednesday, the House Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation heard from the heads of three government agencies with maritime industry oversight during a brief hearing in the wake of President Trump's proposed budget. The Subcommittee, chaired by Rep. Duncan Hunter (R-CA), expressed concerns about the need for suitable funding for the agencies that too often are asked "to do more with less." Testifying before the Subcommittee were the leaders of the Coast Guard, Maritime Administration and the Federal Maritime Commission.

Rep. Hunter expressed his disagreement that the Coast Guard is housed within the Department of Homeland Security whose agencies often suffer from "lackluster funding requests." He noted that the absence of budget clarity has impacted the Coast Guard in its ability to adequately fund its programs which could represent a risk to national security. Ranking Member Rep. John Garamendi (D-CA) was at least relieved that the President's budget request was friendlier to the Coast Guard this year. Last year's budget asked for a 14% cut while this year's request called for an 11% increase. However, he mocked the President's initiative to build "a big beautiful wall" costing \$18 billion – or "perhaps double that" amount. He suggested that allocating the projected funds for the wall over to the Coast Guard would do far more to fight drugs and protect national security. Rep. Peter DeFazio (D-OR) echoed that notion. "When I think of this idiotic wall, wouldn't it be better to spend those dollars on the important programs of the Coast Guard?" he asked.

Commandant Admiral Paul Zukunft testified for the Coast Guard in his likely final appearance before the Subcommittee as Vice Adm. Karl Schultz takes over the agency in early June.

Maritime Administrator Mark Buzby explained that the President's proposal to fund the Maritime Security Program at \$214 million in Fiscal Year 2019 instead of the authorized \$300 million level "reflects hard choices." He strongly affirmed the Transportation Department and MarAd's unequivocal support for the importance of the MSP. Under questioning he doubted that should the 29% cut to the MSP be ultimately appropriated, he doesn't anticipate that operators would necessarily drop out – but admitted the agency would need to "look at" the per-ship payment.

Rep. Garamendi also shook his head at the President's decision to "zero out" the Title XI maritime loan guarantee program that MarAd oversees. "I don't see the logic of the Title XI request," he said. He added that he doesn't "see the logic of much of the budget actually." Admiral Buzby noted that the decision was "a funding issue in a tight year" but admitted Title XI has been "a great benefit to our country."

Reps. Hunter and Garamendi reasserted their strong support for an earlier endorsed plan to build new multi-mission training ships for all the maritime academies to support the next generation of mariners and help respond to national emergencies. The President's budget, however, proposes spending \$300 million to procure and retrofit just two used cargo vessels to replace the aging SUNY and Massachusetts Maritime training ships. Rep. Garamendi criticized the new proposal to purchase "rusty hulks" saying their capabilities would be limited. Admiral Buzby said the replacement vessel proposal was likely made because of the shorter time-frame required to replace the two ancient training ships that can't survive many more years without major expense. However, Buzby admitted that pursuing the multi-mission vessels for the academies "would be the best way to go forward."

As discussed in a different hearing last week, Admiral Buzby was asked about the status of the National Maritime Strategy (NMS), a multi-faceted plan to help revitalize the U.S. maritime industry. The plan died on the vine in late 2016 after the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) raised concerns. Adm. Buzby said a revised NMS was finally off his desk and being addressed by MarAd staff before its planned transmittal to the Transportation Department. He said it should be moving forward quickly. "I think I've heard THAT before," Rep. Garamendi noted wryly. "We await that."

The Acting Chairman of the Federal Maritime Commission Michael Khouri also testified before the Subcommittee. The impending retirement this June of Commissioner Daniel Maffei coupled with the recent departure of Commissioner William Doyle will whittle the FMC down to two Commissioners. Given the possibility that it may take some time for the President to appoint new Commissioners, Khouri has researched the matter and believes that even two Commissioners – of the intended five person board – still constitutes a quorum.

### **SCHULTZ TO SUCCEED ZUKUNFT AT COAST GUARD**

Vice Adm. Karl Schultz has been nominated to serve as the next Coast Guard Commandant. Upon his expected confirmation, he will take over from Adm. Paul Zukunft in June following a change of command ceremony.

VAdm. Schultz serves as the head of the Coast Guard's Atlantic Area as well as Commander, Defense Force East, and provides Coast Guard mission support to the Department of Defense and Combatant Commanders. He is also Director, DHS Joint Task Force East, responsible for achieving the

objectives of the DHS Southern Border, including addressing threats posed by transnational criminal organizations.

"Vice Adm. Schultz will provide the sound leadership and steady hand needed to guide our global military service further into this dynamic and extraordinary era of our nation," said Adm. Zukunft.

Adm. Zukunft will retire following the change of command this summer after four years as Commandant.

### **WHITE HOUSE EXAMINING PERMANENT P.R. JONES ACT EXEMPTION**

Sources indicate the White House is studying whether a permanent Jones Act exemption should be put in place for Puerto Rico.

After Hurricane Maria, unknowledgeable talking heads and anonymous bloggers falsely faulted the Jones Act for preventing delivery of vital relief supplies. A 10-day Jones Act waiver was issued in September 2017 following public pressure. However, it became apparent that the waiver had been unnecessary as U.S. ships had delivered an overabundance of relief supplies but smashed island infrastructure prevented their dispersal. The waiver was not renewed following its expiration.

Clearly, a Jones Act exemption for Puerto Rico is unneeded on the basis of national security, the benchmark for a waiver issuance. But Jones Act opponents, playing into the hands of foreign interests, have continued to smear the statute and push for its waiver or repeal.

The timeline of the White House study is unclear and sources question whether such an action, if pursued, would instead need to be advanced legislatively. You can get the facts about the Jones Act and Puerto Rico at the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/JonesAct-PR>

### **INDUSTRY READY FOR NINTH ANNUAL "SAIL-IN"**

For the ninth year in a row, maritime industry advocates will descend on Capitol Hill for the annual Sail-In as they get ready to visit over 100 Members of Congress from both sides of the aisle.

Representatives from unions, companies and other organizations will take part in the Maritime Congressional Sail-In set for Tuesday, March 20. Though the work in DC goes on all year long, this is a mass, consolidated effort to solidify support with lawmakers and remind Congress about the importance of our industry to the economy and national security. Maritime is a bipartisan industry and ensuring our nation has the port and waterway infrastructure, U.S.-flag ships, and the U.S. crews they demand is in the national interest.

### **SIGN UP FOR M.E.B.A. VACATION PLAN DIRECT DEPOSIT**

Designed for convenience, M.E.B.A. members can help themselves by taking advantage of the Vacation Plan Direct Deposit that will help save them time and ease Plans processing costs. Authorization forms are available from the Plans Office, Plans Outport Offices and at the Plans' website – [www.mebaplans.org](http://www.mebaplans.org) (Forms & Documents, Vacation Plan Forms). Complete details are available on the Plans' site as well. Contact (800) 811-6322 or [vacation@mebaplans.org](mailto:vacation@mebaplans.org) for more info.

**REGULAR MONTHLY MEETINGS**

Monday, April 2 – Boston@1200;

Tuesday, April 3 – CMES@1430; Charleston@1400; Houston@1315; Oakland@1230; Seattle (Fife)@1300;

Wednesday, April 4 – Jacksonville@1300; New Orleans@1315;

Thursday, April 5 – L.A.@1230; NY/NJ@1300; Norfolk@1300; Tampa@1300;

Friday, April 6 – 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; [mebahq@mebaunion.org](mailto:mebahq@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)*